

Dance of Swords

by Tsubasagirl

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Summary: Kira had a life surrounded by dance and school, but it was thrown in the trash as she wakes up in the Edo Period. She's trying to figure out as to why she was brought here, but something dark lies behind that curtain-something sinister. As she continues to struggle to adapt to her new surroundings, her goal: to get home, is blurred thanks to a certain samurai. This is their story.

1. Muffled Voices

****UPDATED CHAPTER****

****Hey guys. I finally decided to update earlier chapters because...gugh! I can't even **_**look**_** at them! ****

****This takes place where Chizuru doesn't exist...and the original plot doesn't exist here either because the ending was HEART WRENCHING. Reason as to why I made this. ****

****I don't own Hakuouki or any of its characters, besides my OC.****

****Remember, this is AU~!****

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><p>Music blasted through the speakers, echoing loudly in the dance studio. Hair flipped around as a group of girls kicked in unison while others leapt and did their own bit.<p>

Kira's wavy brown to black hair was falling out of her bun, though she did it half good so she expected that. She was beyond tired as she had been in the dance studio since one...and it was four now.

She studied herself in the mirror and the girls around her as she came out of the line and kicked and spun, heading to the back to rejoin a couple others. She was rehearsing a dance for jazz.

"One, two, three, four!" and so on counted as the girls worked hard to just get to the last few seconds of the song. Their teacher, Ms. Ray had wavy, short blonde hair. Clad in leggings and a loose shirt, she clapped her hands to keep the girls in step.

Kira was in her zone. Her legs did the thinking and carried her body throughout the dance. She was detached from the world, back in her own place. Stress from school was gone and crummy attitude vanished despite the strain to her body. You could say dance was her life, but it was, as she argued, only $\frac{3}{4}$ of it.

She was ready to do a pirouette...until the music stopped, leaving an emptiness in the room until Ms. Ray started. "Good job ladies, but we'll stop it here. Go home and rest, because tomorrow morning we're going to work on the last part and get the dance right!" She wasn't very strict. Ms. Ray was rather young and had a humorous side, far more than Kira's friends' instructors. She remembered when her one friend got in trouble for not having her bangs out of her face.

Kira let out a breath she was holding and slumped her shoulders. She was so close! The girls nodded at and started to chat, sitting down to stretch out their legs and relax their muscles. Her two friends scooted over to her, panting. One had red hair, which fell out of her ponytail, and the second had dirty blonde, kept up in a braid.

"Ugh, I totally messed up on the kicks...I kept thinking of the wrong leg!" Casy, the one with red hair, groaned as she reached for her heels.

"I nearly fell when she stopped the music!" Kira added, stretching over to her left side. "I was in mid-kick and I swear to God I looked like I was a ninja doing some crazy move." She laughed at herself, and the others followed.

The one with the braid, Bryn, sighed. "It's only _fooooouurrrr_," she whimpered and flopped on her back.

"One more to go!" Casy mused.

"Shut up!"

All three girls had the same classes, jazz, tap and ballet and school was enough work already. They've known each other since elementary and they met in this very studio. It took them all a while to realize that they went to the same school.

To describe these three, Bryn was the quiet airhead, Casy was the blunt and sarcastic one, and Kira was...a mix of everything, though she was louder than anything else.

Just two more hours...and then Kira would be greeted with food. Lots of food.

The three groaned simultaneously. It wasn't because they didn't like tap or that they were _bad_. It was just because it took out even more energy and jazz was draining enough as it was.

"C'mon, we can do this," Kira murmured as she flexed her feet. Her legs were screaming to stay relaxed...and not standing.

"When I get home...I'm gonna fall- I won't even go to my room! I'll just lie on the floor and sleep!" Bryn muttered, stretching out her arms down to her toes.

"Don't even talk about sleep, missy." Casy pleaded as she raked her fingers through her hair.

* * *

><p>Kira yawned obnoxiously as she got into her dad's truck ungracefully. Her feet still had a mind of its own and it was still mimicking the moves from earlier.<p>

"Tiring?" He asked.

"YES." She replied and clicked her seatbelt. She was glad she didn't have a license: otherwise she would've fallen asleep at the wheel.

"Well, your mom made some baked chicken," he said, starting the car.

"I'll eat it all-I can eat a village!"

Her dad's truck had papers upon papers scattered on the dashboard and the back seats, and the entire cabin reeked of work, which was construction. Nothing but the smell of dust, mud, and lumber that was sitting in the trunk.

Kira had changed into her denim shorts and flip-flops, wearing a tank top with striped pink and navy blue. Her hair was back up in the bun she re did, and she was exhausted...as usual.

As her dad pulled out of her parking lot, she looked at the sky. The sun still had a ways away until it was actually sunset, but it was leaning towards that silver line. Though some impatient stars started to peak in the darkening sky and a waning moon was already out.

And then sleep took over her.

As she quickly closed them, she opened them again, only to see stars and swirling blue stardust around her. Still dreaming| she felt something menacing...you could say an aura. Deep resentment lingering around her and pressed up against her, followed by the sound of a distant scream of anger.

She closed her eyes again and felt something cold on her face and a mild air chilling her legs. She woke up again and stretched out her back, satisfied after hearing the roll of cracks from her spine.

Blinking a few times, she surveyed her surroundings. It definitely wasn't the interior of her dad's truck.

More like a village with walls made out of wood, and...windows that were made out of...what looked like paper.

"What...the...hell?" Her fingers grazed along the ground and it wasn't the seat. It was dirt. Standing on wobbly legs, she looked around. It was almost dark this time, as the sunset was turning into night. She saw lanterns strung in front of doors and people in the far distance with weird-looking dresses. Ahh...what was it...kimono? The thing that the Japanese wore? She shook her head, giving up on the thought.

_Still dreaming...calm down! _She looked at the wooden barrels and crates that stood next to her. And then she caught a whiff of something cooking..._foodâ€|_

_It's still a dream-relax! _

Light appeared from the corner of her eye and she whipped around only to feel something warm trickle down her right arm. Her hand went up to touch it...and it was soaked in blood.

She didn't have time to scream, but she looked up. _Not a dream-! _A swordâ€| stained in the deep crimson lingered in front of her. Kira nearly gagged. _Nasty! Ugh! _

The one wielding the sword had snow white hair and red eyes. It was as if they were glowing. It was a man, with a malicious grin with splatters of blood dotting the side of his face and clothes, like paint. It was a similar evil feeling she had a bit earlier.

A weird light blue long sleeved jacket was covered blood and that was as far as she got as she heard him laugh and leer at her. It was like he was possessed or something. It said something...she wasn't sure what it was. It sounded like 'chi'...whatever that meant.

A pang of fear stabbed her. He spoke in a voice that sounded like it was coming from a defective voice changer. Her heart dropped down to her stomach as she felt adrenaline pump through her. "Get away from me!" She yelled as she backed away from him, unknowingly further down an alleyway.

It laughed again and took another swing at her, but stopped.

Light cut through the air and something pierced the creature from behind. It screeched as it arched its back in agony as the sword was ripped out of it, spattering even more blood.

She felt it touch her cheeks. _OH MY GOD! _She cringed and closed her eyes, trying to keep herself from throwing up.

The body fell with a thud, blood pooling out. She looked at the walls on both sides...covered in blood too. It was like someone took a paint brush and splattered bits of it on the wall. She felt her stomach churn at the sight of it and she tore her gaze to who saved her life.

A man with a white bandana across his forehead stood a few feet away from her. He had spiky brown hair and literally he was ripped...gross. He wore the same thing like what that creature did.

Crap! Another one of those?!

He said something...but she didn't understand. She let out a frustrated noise and spun around, sprinting away. She heard shouting and footsteps coming after her, shifting into a new gear, her legs screamed in agony as she went faster and faster. Kira nearly slipped as she turned at a corner, but she didn't stop running.

Her heart thrummed against her chest, and she didn't want to stop running. Though it didn't take her long to plow into someone. Her flip-flop got caught under her foot and she stumbled ungracefully.

She yelped and stumbled backwards, struggling to get her flip-flop back to normal. "Sorry about that!" she blurted out.

She heard another set of unfamiliar words and she looked at the person she bumped into.

Well, she would admit that he was pretty good looking. Brownish hair with emerald eyes...though he was wearing the same garb that that thing was wearing and the other guy. Her eyes darted to the red spots on his jacket and then back at her shoulder. Dang, she was still bleeding. _Wonderful..._

He lifted his eyebrows at her and blinked, and then he said something else. She wanted to question...though she had a feeling they weren't understanding her either. Another voice sounded from behind.

Turning, she saw the guy who assumingly saved her. He sheathed his sword and walked to the guy she ran into. And then there was another guy who rounded corner, meeting up with the little group that was established. It was safe to say that this guy had the longest hair she had ever seen. Brown hair, blue-green eyes...and that jacket, with two swords tied at his hip. It dawned on her that they all carried swords.

Oh boyâ€¦!

He was rather short, basically as tall as her, maybe she was a bit taller. He looked at her curiously before joining the conversation with the taller ones. They glanced at her occasionally and resumed talking. It felt like gibberish in her ears, like when the computer reads aloud a bunch of letter from keysmashing.

"Uh...what's going on her?" It was worth a shot.

They stopped and looked at her, and then continued to chat.

She let out a frustrated sigh. _Yeah, they can't understand me. What kind of language is this? Japanese or something?_

The three disbanded the conversation and pony-tail guy gestured in a direction. She remained stubborn, wanting to dig her toes and take root to the ground. _I'm not going anywhere! Not until I know what's going on!_ The cut on her arm was more than enough to prove that...this wasn't a dream. Her legs were still crying in agony and she was beyond exhausted. She shook her head.

They started to chat again, and the guy with emerald eyes looked at

her. He smiled at her and extended a hand towards her. It seemed almost genuine...but something was off. Or maybe she was just being paranoid.

It was a war going inside her mind as she was petrified with fear, but lingering curiosity hung in the back of her mind. She had no idea what to do next but just take the offer...better than rotting alone in this town.

Taking a breath, she took his hand, hearing the crackle of dried blood from her arm. She needed to get that patched up soon. His smile turned into a playful smirk-_I knew it!_ She tried to pull away, but he started to lead her down the road with a surprising amount of strength. The two other guys grinned and cheered as if this guy won something.

She sighed as she was escorted to their destination.

* * *

><p>She was in a building that was surrounded by a large wall. Here, she knew it was Japan for sure because of all the similar designs the buildings had to the pictures in her high school text book.<p>

They started to walk down what looked like an open hall, and Kira followed until the guy, now with a green bandana, turned and pointed at her feet.

_Whatâ€|? No shoes allowed or something? _She shrugged off the thought and semi-gracefully took them off, almost kicking one away as it didn't get off her foot fast enough. She nearly stumbled to catch up.

Sliding a door open, the four stepped inside with the short guy closing it behind them. She looked around, finding mats on the floor with decorative scrolls...and a few other guys were already inside. Another door was in the far corner of the room.

The chattering stopped and all eyes were on Kira.

She blinked and her hand immediately went to her wound. By now her hand was covered in dried blood. _This is...really awkward. _

A guy with dark red hair tied back, and amber eyes with a shirt that clung to his body, showing a part of his chest said something, and the guy with the ponytail responded.

A man with indigo hair-_out of all things!_- swept to the side in a ponytail murmured something that made the room go silent.

She could've sworn they were looking at her clothes, finally realizing after all this time she was sticking out a like a sore thumb. And then one pointed at her wound.

Before anything else happened, the door behind her opened, she jumped and backed away as three more men walked in, looking to be in their thirties.

One with long black hair in a ponytails, one with glasses, and another with black, short hair. Again, she got another set of eyes

looking at her her, confused.

The man with long hair asked in a deep voice, that rattled her ribcage, said something, sending daggers with his eyes at Kira, who looked beyond confused and terrified.

The man with short hair pointed at her wound and the guy with glasses nodded. There were too many voices going on; she felt like she was getting a headache.

He looked at Kira and motioned her to come closer. She did, and he started to walk to the back door. Following him, she found herself in a small hall that led to another room.

As she listened to the chatter outside, the man with glasses pulled out a drawer and took out what looked like medical supplies.

Oh, thank God.

Wetting the cloth with...she assumed it was peroxide, she removed her hand and let him clean the wound. She gritted her teeth, feeling the sting. Before she knew it, he wrapped a bandage around her and quickly wiped off her hand.

_That was fast..._she nodded to the man, hoping he would understand the silent thanks. He did the same and the two returned to the main room.

Almost all the men inside were talking, taking glances at her, and then continued to talk. The feeling to just blurt something out was gnawing at her. The man with the black ponytail shook his head, obviously frustrated and looked at her before back at the guy with emerald eyes.

It sounded like they were convincing each other to do something, with black ponytail-guy completely against it. The short guy and the muscular bandana-guy seemed the most passionate about this.

Eventually, long ponytail-guy sighed, admitting defeat. Some of the guys cheered.

* * *

><p>It was around dinner time, and she was more than grateful. She was given a try with a bowl of rice and chopsticks with plate of fish. Taking the cup, she took a sip. Water. So it wasn't poisoned, but she had other things to worry about.<p>

Like how to use chopsticks for eating rice. She groaned inwardly. She knew how to use them for other food...just not rice; it kept on slipping through or it wasn't sticking.

A second later, she was snapped out of her trance as she saw a hand reach for the bowl. She blinked, "Hey!" Snatching the bowl, she slapped the guy with red hair and amber eyes' hand. "I'm gonna eat that!" He looked surprised for a second.

The guy with the green bandana laughed, including the short one, eventually choking on his food, making his friend laugh even

harder.

She rolled her eyes, locking stares with the guy with green eyes. He rested on the wall across from her. He smirked and tilted his head, as if wondering if she had something else to say. Tearing her gaze away, she grabbed the chopsticks and scooped up a pathetic amount of rice. Though most of the attention was on the same two guys bickering over something.

Kira stared at it for a moment. _Maybe I can just scoop it along the bowlâ€|? _She was glad with the results, basically she was shoveling rice in her mouth.

And then something strange happened. The unfamiliar words jumbled and repositioned. First it was a blur, then it started to sound like English. Like a record starting on a wind-up record player. She almost dropped the bowl, too excited to finally understand!

"She's almost like a kid, watching her can be a burdenâ€|" the guy with indigo hair said.

She looked at him and slammed the bowl down, clattering loudly. "What did you say about me?!" Maybe she was a bit _too _excited, because it caught everyone's attention. She swallowed.

* * *

><p>Anyways, here are some clarifications:

****There is a reason why she suddenly 'transported' to Kyoto. She did fall asleep, but I repeat, this is not a dream! The reason as to what it is will be in later chapters!**

****To make it realistic-ish, Kira had no idea what they were saying because she's now in Japan!****

****Yes, there's a reason why she could suddenly understand what they were saying...will be explained in the future!****

****Again, she's American, so she doesn't really know about kimono, haori, the custom to take off shoes etc. She isn't an otaku like us ;)****

****Fun facts: ****

****Her name means 'to glitter' or 'star' in Japanese. It's also used in America, so it was easy to pick it. ****

****Sorry if there was little to no fluff between Kira and Okita! It'll speed up!****

****Thanks for reading! Don't forget to leave a review! See you next time. ****

****~Jen****

2. Difference of Time

****UPDATED CHAPTER 11/7/14****

****Hey you guys! This is just another updated chapter, and for those of you who have just started reading, forgive me for these horrible chapters coming up-I'm set on updating the earlier chapters to meet the higher quality the later chapters provided. Please bear with me DX ****

****Enjoy.****

*** * ***

><p>The guy with the green bandana broke the silence, "Hey! She talked!" He pointed his chopsticks at her with wide eyes.<p>

She scowled to herself. _I've been talking all this time._

"Hey! Say something else!" The guy with brown hair in a ponytail exclaimed.

"Something else," she replied.

The ice melted and things were getting back up to pace. Conversations started to spring up left and right.

The man with long, black hair spoke, "So, you could talk all this time?" He inquired.

He sounded a bit ticked off, and it sent goose bumps down her neck, "Iâ€|" _They'll think I'm crazy if I just say that I ate something and started to 'talk'. _"Was petrified with fearâ€|" and I spoke a different languageâ€|"?" She strung words together frantically. She wanted to hit the back of her head. That was the most pathetic excuse she had ever come up with.

"See Hijikata-san? Now you _can't_ throw her out!" The guy with the green bandana called out.

"Throw me out?!" Kira widened her eyes. _Would he seriously do that?!_

Emerald eyes answered back, "Since you couldn't speak Japanese, he was thinking of throwing you out, since you were _useless_. As if anyone would understand anything if you tried to explain what happened." He still had that smile and he winked at her. "Besides, you wouldn't be much help around the place if you couldn't understand anything."

Honestly, this guy was just getting under her skin.

"So, would you be so kind to tell us from the beginning how this all happened?" The man with glasses asked as he took a sip from the cup.

It was silent again.

"I suppose so," she said as she put her bowl of rice and chopsticks back on the tray. She sat cross-legged and cracked her knuckles rather unlady like. "I was coming back from dance class, in _my_ country, and then I fell asleep. The next thing I knew, I woke up in

an alley. I thought this was all a dreamâ€¦ until thisâ€¦ thingâ€¦ with white hair and red eyes stabbed my arm," she said as she pointed her bandage. "And then I saw him," she pointed at the guy with the green bandana, "kill it, and I ran away and then bumped into him," she then pointed to the guy sitting across from her. "I had no idea what was going on, let alone understand what they were all saying, and then I got here."

They all sat there, processing her excessively long story, causing her to shift a bit. "It sounds crazy," she added, "and it could be, but it's the truth."

Again, silence was all there was in the room. Kira felt uneasy.

"Where are you from?" The guy with the red hair asked.

"Ahh...North America." She said. She didn't know how far she was back in time...North America was probably just inhabited by native Americans probably.

"No way! You're a Westerner?!" Brown-ponytail exclaimed.

She nodded.

"So then how did you get all the way over here? I haven't heard of a boat with incoming Westerners!"

"I _told _you!" She exasperated. "I fell asleep and _boom_, I'm here."

"We can figure out her whereabouts later...more importantly," the man called Hijikata started, "When you first...woke up...you saw _them_, didn't you?"

"Them as inâ€¦those white-haired guys?"

He nodded, furrowing his brows out of frustration. "One problem after another," he sighed.

Kira looked at the guy with glasses next to him for an answer. "What he means is that the same time you arrived, a girl disappeared. And those white-haired men...they're a problem on their own."

_Why is everyone being so secretive? _

"So what should we do now?" The guy with emerald eyes asked.

"We can let her stay," the man with short, black hair said. He smiled at Kira, "What kind of man throws a girl out on the streets?"

Hijikata widened his eyes, "What?! We can't do something like that! Why do you have to be so inviting to every stranger?"

He laughed. "Being too strict can be a problem."

"...I guess. It's not like she can blend in with everyone else." Hijikata sighed. "Besides, killing her would be unnecessary until we find some answers." His eyes studied her clothes. "Just stay inside

the walls, and _do not_ leave the property unless instructed by one of us."

His cold tone made her shiver. "U-understood."

The guy who tried to steal her rice bowl rested his elbow on his propped knee, and looked at her, giving her a charming smile. "Looks like you won't be killed today. So, you never mentioned your name."

She turned her head to look at him. "Oh, I'm Kira Hale."

"Definitely foreignâ€¦ what kind of name is _Hale_?"

"My last name. It's used where I'm from," she sassed. "But, just call me Kira."

"I'm Harada Sanosuke." He chuckled.

"You forgot the title: _old man._" The guy beside him laughed.

"Ey, pipsqueak, you should know your place and respect your elder!" He grinned and punched his shoulder. "This runt is Toudou Heisuke."

The guy with emerald eyes spoke the rest, "_Anyways_, I'm Okita Souji, the grumpy one is Hijikata Toshizo," earning him a glare from said man, but Okita just grinned deviously at him, "this is Saito Hajime," he nudged the guy next to him. "The man with glasses is Sannan and that's Isami Kondou-"

"The other old guy," Heisuke gasped -he was put in a choke hold by Harada- "is Shinpachi-san," he pointed weakly at the guy with the bandana.

"Save your breath squirt, you're gonna need it," Shinpachi snickered. Kira just stared at the two. "Try not to kill him, soldier." She arched a brow and gave him the thumbs up.

"Ahh, don't worry, this kid has nine lives," he chuckled.

Kondou looked at Kira, ignoring the ruckus, "Do you mind telling us what you're good at? Toshi is right where we need people who can do things and not laze around and be useless." He had this fatherly aura about him.

"I...can dance. I'm very flexible...and I can run fast. I can do typical chores and stuff, but anyone can do that."

He nodded, processing something. "Well, you need to be put under someone's wingâ€¦" he murmured.

Silence went through the room again as Heisuke broke free of his captor and went to scarf down the rest of his food. Kira fidgeted, just staring at her tray of food.

"I'll do it," Okita said, basically bulldozing the sheet of ice that was forming. She looked up and arched a brow.

"Really, Souji?" Kondou asked.

He shrugged and half smirked at her, "She's interesting."

_What does _that_ even mean?! _

A few minutes ticked away, Hijikata, Sannan and Kondou left to consult a few things, leaving Kira in a room full of guys. Well, it was full of guys to begin with. They all started to talk about different things, things that she had no idea about. She started to go off in her own world-

"Hey, Kira-chan," Heisuke said, pointing at her with his chopsticks.

She looked up, "Yeah?" _What's this -chan thing? _

"Aren't you hungry? Earlier you snatched the bowl away so fast! Faster than me!" He grinned.

"So that means your reflexes are worse than we thought!" Shinpachi laughed.

Heisuke sneered at him.

"I am hungry!" Kira affirmed and took her chopsticks and bowl of rice in another hand. Though it seemed like all eyes were on her...and to be honest, she hadn't used chopsticks in a while. She fumbled with them, and they kept on crossing over each other as she tried to get a scoop.

"Do you not know how to use chopsticks?" Okita asked, grinning.

"I do!" She fumed, cheeks probably red out of embarrassment.
"Just...I'm nervous!"

"Why?"

She sighed, "Let's just say, in America we don't use chopsticks a lot! We use a fork and a knife! I feel like you're judging me silently."

"Who said it was silently?"

She pursed her lips and glared at him. "You're irrelevant." She glanced at her rice bowl again. "I request assistance," Kira sighed.

Okita smirked and walked over to her spot, taking a seat next to her. Heisuke and his buddies were off talking about something, while Saito just sat and ate in silence, glancing at the three occasionally.

Kira held the chopsticks and Okita placed his hand over hers. "Hold it like this-don't hold it so tightly."

It felt like she was going to drop the chopsticks. Okita let go of her hand as she scooped a decent amount of rice, and her eyes widened. _I did it...finally! _Though almost immediately, that moment of glory ended as Okita grabbed her hand and took the rice from said chopsticks.

"Hey! You already ate!" She exclaimed, yanking her hand back.

"I'm helping you...I deserve a reward!" He replied.

"You didn't even help a little," she pointed out. "I swear to God, if you do that again, I will rip off your face. Go! Shoo," she flicked her chopsticks at him.

"Got a temper, huh?" Okita just smiled, ignoring her little threat. "That's pretty cute, don't you think, Kira-_chan_?"

"...Go away."

* * *

><p>Despite Okita stealing bits of her food ever since he helped her, she was grateful, and so was her hunger. As dinner came to a stop, Kira went outside to explore the compound, stopping short when she got to a small garden.

It was dark outside now, and crickets chirped loudly. Back home, she could only hear the sound of cars and obnoxious people blasting their music down the road. She rested her head on a beam when someone tapped her on the shoulder.

"Hey, Kira-chan, whatcha doin?" Heisuke grinned as he took a seat next to her.

"Sitting. I live a very fascinating life, don't you know?" She replied semi-sweetly.

He sighed. "It must be weird, being here all of a sudden."

"You bet it is," she nodded. "It's like the first day of school all over again...only foreign. And what's with the 'chan' at the end of my name?"

"Oh _that_? What, you're not offended by that are you?" He asked, as if really concerned about it. Kira arched a brow and shook her head. "Why would I? I just don't know what it means!"

"Oh," he sighed of relief. "It's ahh...a term meaning friend or something like that. It's either used girl-to-girl or guy-to-girl."

"What's girl-to-guy then?"

"You would call me, Heisuke-_kun_."

She only nodded. As much as she wanted to question why they would use these names instead of just using a first name, she let out a yawn, slapping a hand over her mouth. "Sorry...it's been a long day." Despite everything that has happened, she didn't react to any of this as much as she thought she would. In the pit of her stomach, she hoped that this was all a dream.

"Same, ever since that girl disappearing, patrols are growing more often-"

"You're just gonna tell her _everything_ then?" Okita's voice came from behind.

"Wha-is that so bad?" He exclaimed, turning around.

"I wanted to tell her everything," he feigned hurt and looked at Kira, throwing her a wink. Something about him seemed dangerous. His emerald eyes sent this unnerving feeling down her spine, like there was something sinister that was hiding behind a smirk. "Here, I'll show you where you'll sleep," he said.

The girl stood, trying to shake off the feeling of numb legs before following Okita, waving at Heisuke. The moment she stood, her eyes started to droop and she dragged her feet. She was the epitome of tired. Nearly bumping into Okita the second he stopped, he gestured to the door. "Here you are," he said.

She nodded and slinked into the dark room. Glancing over at him, she smiled. Either she was too tired or focused on the futon. "Thanks." Okita blinked and nodded once, picking up his head as if to study her and then his emerald eyes glinted back to normal. He shut the door behind him, and Kira was alone once again.

The only source of light was the streamers of moonlight coming from the window, so she felt around for the mat with her feet. Letting out an obnoxious yawn, she slipped under the covers and plopped her head on the pillow, jumping into sleep.

* * *

><p>She squinted her eyes open only to get shot at with a flash of light. Groaning, she rolled on her other side and held the blanket close to her, curling into a ball. I thought I told mom to keep the blinds closed!

It was too late to go back to sleep now. Sitting up, unaware of the wonderfully massive bush of hair on her head, she felt around the floor for her phone and looked at the time. It was then when she realized that it was rather warm in her room, and her arm hurt.

Tired eyes lazily trailed up her arm to discover the bandage.

Something in her brain snapped as she immediately recollected all of her thoughts from the previous hours. Her eyes darted to one thing and then another, and the panic struck her like lightning to a tree. Murmuring "Oh my god" repeatedly, she kicked off the covers and ran a hand through her messy hair. "No, no, no, no!" The brunette planted her face on her knees, trying to process it all.

She continued to sit there. She fell asleep in the car, woke up in a village, got attacked, and then got help. Her wound was dressed and now she's with a bunch of guys in a Japanese house-er-mansion.

Her eyes blinked furiously, but tears didn't come out. She didn't know how to feel about this in general. It still seemed too surreal for her, and that this was just her mind playing a sick joke on her.

Letting out a sigh, she looked up again, observing the room. The one she was in didn't have light blue walls with large cloud wall stickers. Her cherry oak desk wasn't propped up against the wall next to the window, and neither was her dresser. She nodded to herself, confirming that she still wasn't dreaming.

Her stomach rumbled just in time.

Kira got up to her feet, quickly tying back her horrid hair in an even messier bun and left the room, following the scent of food. Stretching her back in mid-walk, she let out a satisfied noise as she stepped inside where she ate the last time.

Pairs of eyes looked up at her. "Morning, Kira-chan!" Harada greeted.

"Looks like someone had a good sleep." Shinpachi added.

Nodding, she stretched out her arms. "Yep."

Okita walked out with a tray of food and chuckled as he pointed to his face to mirror hers. "You have tatami marks all over your face."

_Ta_â€•_what? _Furrowing her brows, she asked, "What's that?"

The guys chuckled. "It didn't work for once," Saito murmured.

Okita frowned, but it didn't stay long. "Guess I have to work harder for you." He said to her, who was still too dazed to comprehend what was going on. Breakfast went by quickly, as Kira wolfed down her food, fast enough to challenge Shinpachi to an eating contest.

When she left, she dug out her phone, flipping through all the apps until she came across her songs. _Might as well dance...I have nothing else to do around here. _She just needed to find a big enough room so she wouldn't kick, or crash into anything. Trekking further into the compound, her curiosity led her to an empty room, literally the size she just needed. Peering inside to see if no one was there, she went in. The room reeked of sweat, it was probably used recently, and she scrunched up her nose.

After her series of stretches, she went through the list to find her jazz routine, setting it at its loudest volume.

Setting it on the floor, she took a few steps, waiting for her cue. And then her mind shut off again, letting her legs do the rest. Imagining all of the girls with her, she would wait for her cue to jump in, waiting for each girl to perform their move. Spinning to 'back-stage' she practiced small kicks, taking mental notes. She leapt back 'onstage', introducing the new set.

And that was as far as her class got, so she improvisedâ€•rather patheticallyâ€•before calling it quits. Just as she was about to pick up her phone, she heard voices and whipped her head around, immediately stopping the song.

Literally everyone she met thus far was standing at the door, staring at her with gaping jaws and wide eyes. Guess they didn't know what she meant by _dance_. "Uh...hiâ€•|." she said, swallowing sudden

nervousness and embarrassment. After years of performing, she was whittled down to the nervous newbie...just being around these guys made her unsettled.

"You _do_ dance!" Heisuke started.

Slipping her phone in her pocket, she nodded. "Yeah. I dance for four hours a day•so what are you guys doing here anyways? I thought you were still eating breakfast."

"We heard strange music." Saito said.

_It was _that_ loud? _

Harada rested his arm on the door frame. "Where did it come from?"

_If I told them, I would be attacked with questions. _And our lovely heroine wasn't all that tech savvy.

* * *

><p>After a few minutes, Kira gave up on trying to explain what technology was like back home. WiFi, YouTube, Google•let's just say it was a lost cause. Skipping her struggle with explaining her phone to the guys, she heard Okita mention about he and the others have morning patrol•whatever that was. That was something else she needed to figure out. Was it safety patrol or something? Like what police do?<p>

She was alone again, sitting in the garden, listening to her music as she struggled to not play any games to preserve her battery life. Beyond her music, she could feel the vibrations on the wooden floors and turned her head to see Kondou with a frustrated expression. Taking out her earbuds, she asked, "Is something wrong?"

"You said you can run fast, right?"

She nodded.

"You need to get a message to Souji and Hajime! Yamazaki-kun is out for the day. The criminals are on the south side of Kyoto! They're being set up!"

"So where would I find them?" _Because I have no idea where things are in Kyoto...let alone navigate in this building! _She was starting to get nervous.

"They shouldn't be too far. They're heading west. Go!"

Kira nodded, rather nervously and got up to her feet, hoping she remembered where in the world she put her flip-flops.

Here we go...Kira's Life Chapter One: I Have No Idea Where I'm Going

* * *

><p>And• another chapter has been finished! Oh, Kira• you have absolutely no idea where to go• *sigh

** I absolutely loved it when Kira showed the guys her iPod! XD it was just so adorable, and I couldn't help from grinning like an idiot as I typed it! Past meets futureâ€|**

** I never thought I would be this excited about this story, so I'm just going to spend my night typing chapter 3. **

** Oh, and thank you for the lovely reviews, honestly, they just make my day! **

** And yes, I'm aware that she still has her modern clothes on.**

UPDATE: I'm updating these chapters slowly...forgive me xD

3. Challenges that Lie Ahead

First off, I want to say:

Oh my goodness, these reviews. They make my heart flutter (that was stupid, but that's what I'm feeling right now) and I just can't help but smile. Seriously, I'm so happy that you guys are enjoying this story, (even though this story just has 3 chapters in it so far) and wellâ€| I just want to say thanks to all of you who review, hugs to you all! You are amazing people!

Well, here you go, the 3**rd**** chapter! R&R!**

* * *

><p>Kira managed to slip on her flip-flops in half a second before nearly stumbling down the cement stairs and dashing for the wooden gates. How she managed to find her flip-flops was beyond her comprehension, but she had something else to worry about.<p>

She grabbed the handle and pulled, grateful that it actually opened with a creak of wood. If only she knew that she would wake up in somewhat ancient Japan, she would've brought sneakers. Not paying attention to her surroundings as much, she sprinted through the main dirt road.

As her legs took off, she heard murmurs spreading amongst the townsfolk, commenting on her outfit, on occasion, she heard a mother warn their kids not to look.

After running past a few buildings with half-cut curtains with strange symbols on them, she decided to take one of the smaller roads, passing many people as she ran.

Okay, finding guys in light blue jackets won't be hardâ€| right? She reached a fork in the path and scanned both sides. Both seemed rather empty. She sighed and took the one on her left. A cloud of dust emerged from the ground as her flip-flops slapped the dirt road.

She winced as pain grew with each step. _Blisters. Stupid flip-flops._ She looked up, to see a few clouds lazily float across the sky, and the sun was nearly in the middle of the sky.

She stopped running and saw a woman carrying a bag, running up to her she asked, "Excuse me, have you seen any men here with white bandanas and blue jackets?" She had no idea if they even used the word 'jacket'.

The woman looked at her, surprised. She glanced at Kira up and down before giving Kira a look, either of disgust or fear, "I'm sorry," she said. "Haven't seen anyone."

Kira sighed, "Thanks anyway," she said before taking off.

Seconds seemed like hours as she asked a number of people if they saw Okita, Heisuke, or the others, but it was all a similar answer, "No, sorry." and "Sorry, I can't help you out."

She couldn't help but think that they purposely said 'no' because of the way she was dressed. It was starting to get to her.

A flash of light blue caught her eye. She whipped around so see a few men walking on a distant road, and they were leaving quickly.

Aha! There they are!

Kira dashed to where she saw them at high gear. Arms pumping and heart racing. The summer heat didn't make it any easier either.

Reaching a corner, she slid on her feet and changed direction, nearly slipping, and perused after them. She could easily see a group of men, swords at their sides and the ends of the bandanas fluttering with each step.

I need to get to the front.

Despite her aching feet, she continued to run, nearly crashing into people walking in the opposite direction.

Almost there.

When she finally made it to the front of the flank, she stopped on her feet and slid right in front of Saito and Okita. They stopped, and immediately, the men behind them did as well.

They all looked surprised.

"Hale-san, what are you doing out here?" Saito asked with a surprised expression.

"Aren't you supposed to be back at headquarters, Kira-chan?" Okita added. His face had a similar shocked look.

Kira took in a few breaths, "Apparently, the criminals are in the South part of Kyoto!" _How in the world did I memorize that?!_

Both looked surprised.

Saito nodded at Okita and turned to the men behind them. "Let's go!"

"Yes!" The men repeated in unison.

Saito and the other men rushed down a different path, the sounds of clattering swords and pounding feet filled the sky.

Okita looked at Kira, "How did you get here so fast?"

"I ran." She said, taking in breaths in between words. Running in flip-flops might as well be like running over burning charcoal. In between both of her big toes had the most pain, followed by the sides of her feet where the straps of the flip-flops connected with the soles of the sandal.

"Wow," he breathed in as he smirked. "You do run fast." He turned to where Saito and the rest of the men headed. "Now, c'mon." He said as he started to run.

Oh, God. Not again. She sighed and ran after him. She cringed at the pain, but she pressed on, in hopes of not being left behind in the dust, lost in the town.

And then she looked at him as she ran. Taking short glances at him so that she wouldn't bump into anything.

Okita held his two swords at his hip as he sprinted through the alleyways, Kira, not too far behind. In fact, she was neck and neck with him.

If only she could ditch her flip-flops, but running on a dirt road, barefoot, wasn't the best idea. Who knows what was on it, and she had no idea if their medical field was good enough if she got an infection.

Once they turned at a corner, Kira could see an opening, leading to a larger road.

It only took seconds for them to catch up to the rest of the group.

They finally slowed their pace as the group dispersed as they each fought someone. Swords clashed with each other, and screams were heard. She saw the blood, as if it were yesterday, being splattered on the ground. That is just so€|

"Hmm, looks like they got all of the fun," Okita pouted as more men fell down, mostly were the men that weren't wearing the light blue jackets. But a few were sprawled on the ground, dead in their own pools of blood, and their sword not too far away.

The scent was back again. Kira held her breath, to prevent herself from throwing up. I'm never going to get used to this. And how is this fun?!_

Okita muttered something before facing her, pulling out his sword. The metal glinted in the sun, making her cringe. Wait€| what is he doing?!_

In a blur, he brought the sword right past her ear, and she felt something warm touch the back of her legs.

Right behind her, she heard a man grunt and then the sound of a dropped sword. She jumped and spun around. There lay a man, with a bloody hole in his chest, with streams of crimson streaming down his slightly parted mouth. His eyes were open and empty.

Dead.

She watched as his clothing started to get bloodier as the red liquid poured out of his body. She didn't even hear him approach!

Her eyes darted to the sword that just saved her. The top half of the sword was covered in blood, and she could smell it.

"That was close," he smirked at the dead body.

_Really close. _"Uhâ€| t-thanksâ€|?"

He didn't respond with words, he just kept that devilish smirk on as he spun around and slashed a man's stomach.

Kira averted her gaze quickly to not see anymore, but she couldn't help but watch as Okita moved around fluidly, nearly killing any man who tried to attack him with one slash.

"Stay close to me, and try not to get killed, or I might kill _you_," he said in a gentle, but menacing look, before he turned his attention to killing the men who charged at him.

She couldn't speak. She never experienced anything so gory in her life, nor did she ever hear the calmest threat ever! And it wasn't those overly dramatic effects when someone gets shot in a movie. It was simpler, but the aftereffects were brutal.

As the number of the enemy's men dwindled to oneâ€"zero, the last one fell with two wounds one going in his torso and one stabbed where his heart was.

Every guy had bloodstains on his face, hands and parts of his clothes, but they acted as if it were nothing.

During the fight, Kira didn't move from the spot she stood in the moment she got there. Too afraid to move her legs, and also her feet were killing her.

"We managed to kill them all," Saito said as he cleaned some of the blood off of his sword with a piece of clean cloth from one of the fallen men. His white scarf had a few spots of crimson on it.

The men with the light blue jackets did the same, some helping others up due to an injury.

Greatâ€| because killing is alright.

"You had most of the fun though, Hajime-kun," Okita countered as he surveyed the scene.

Kira did the same, and saw women and children backing away in fear, men reaching for their swords, just in case they were about to be attacked.

They all looked terrified. She would be too. Right now, she was just grossed out.

"Hey, Kira-chan," Okita spoke.

She looked at him.

"You did well today," he said. "Turns out I won't kill you."

_What's up with him and threats?! _Kira just nodded and shifted stances. She winced and finally had enough. Tearing her flip-flops off of her feet and into her hands, she felt the breeze cool off her burning blisters. Looking at Okita she asked, "Where are the others?"

"Oh, they have different rounds than us. We don't usually see each other until patrolling is done." He glanced at her feet, "Do you _want_ to step in blood in bare feet?"

"These stupid flip-flops were giving me blisters, and I couldn't take it anymore."

"Well, it's going to be a long walk back to headquarters," Saito said.

Kira just shrugged.

Okita teased, "Oh, do you want me to carry you then?"

"Nah, I'm fine," she replied, unfazed.

"We better go report this back," Saito said as he looked at Kira with piercing blue eyes.

She put up her hands in defense, "Sorry, but if you expect me to run back, I won't do it. I have no idea where it is."

â€|

"I still can't believe that they were all hiding in one small building," Heisuke remarked.

"Not exactly the smartest people," Saito said as he scrubbed his bloodied scarf with a washcloth.

They all returned to headquarters, and Kira, Okita and Saito were washing the blood off. Well, Kira was still a bit zoned out. The afternoon sun was cooking her hair, and if it were a few degrees hotter, she could've used it as a way to cook eggs on it. And the reflection of the sun was on the water in the bucket, making her cringe.

"So how did you make it to Okita-san and Hajime-kun so quickly, Kira-chan?" Sanosuke asked.

Kira didn't hear much. She just stared at the newly added blood splatters on her leg.

"Kira-chan!" He said again.

She blinked and jumped slightly, "Oh? What? Hello!" she sighed and placed her hand on the side of her head, "No, sorry, I'm just a bit zoned out right now."

"We could tell, since you haven't even touched the washcloth," Saito said.

"Is Kira-chan still shaken up?" Okita mused with his smirk curling his lips.

She looked at him, "Yup. Well, there was justâ€¦ too muchâ€¦ blood."

"Well that's what you get when you're standing right in the middle of a fight," Saito replied.

"You're over exaggerating," she said, slightly annoyed. Both targeting Saito and Okita "I wasn't in the _middle_ of it. More like in the sidelines."

Okita shrugged, "Same difference."

"Besides, my feet were killing me. I could barely move because they hurt so badly!" She looked at her blisters, to see that they've gotten worse. They would be there for a while. And the walk back to headquarters wasn't a walk in the park either. People looked at her funny and she heard a few comments about it too, and what's worse what thatâ€¦"

"And then you stepped in bloodâ€¦" he added with a chuckle.

Kira shivered, "Ugh! Don't remind me! It was still warm!" She hunched her shoulders and her fingers twitched. She was happy that no blood got on her blisters, or in an _open_ one. That would've been a problem.

Her left foot, the unfortunate one, moved, only to feel the crackle of dry blood and dirt.

Shinpachi mentioned, "Seems that you don't like this kind of stuff."

_Killing? Blood? Of course not! _"Well, it's not like I'm surrounded in blood and swords in my daily life, unlike you guys, who seem totally fine about it." She tried not to scowl.

â€¦

"So, Hale-san managed to get to Souji and Hajime-kun in time?" Kondou asked.

"Yes, she reached us within a few minutes after we left headquarters," Saito confirmed.

Kira sat in the middle of the meeting, somewhat awkwardly, with her legs crossed on a mat. It was like dinner from last night all over again. Kira remained silent most of the time, wishing that she could just leave and listen to some music. She was bored overall.

"Well, Hale-san, you did a good job today." Sannan said, with his

hands in his sleeves.

Her daze didn't interfere her hearing, so she immediately nodded.
"Thanks."

"I'm sure being in the middle of that fight was a bit intense for you," Kondou said with an apologetic look.

She nodded regretfully, "Just a little." She immediately blocked all of the bloody memories to keep herself from nearly gagging. She never thought it would be that nasty, since in most movies, they usually don't show all of the gore in it.

Hijikata spoke, "Since we don't have many messengers, you could be the next one." He said to Kira, who stiffened a bit. The way he talked still got to her, even though he wasn't sending daggers at her like he did earlier.

Kira didn't exactly respond because Kondou beat her to it. "But you don't know how to fight, do you?"

She shook her head. "Not exactly." If you count fooling around with plastic swords with your friends in a dollar store, then maybe—

"Hmm, well then, she needs to learn quickly," Sannan said as he turned to Hijikata.

He nodded as well. "It would be a waste, and dangerous for her to run around not knowing the basics."

Guess he's not as cruel— he's just still— scary.

The three men looked at Okita. "Souji," Kondou started, "since you said you would take care of her, why don't you teach her?"

Before Okita could respond, Heisuke blurted out, "Ehh?! Okita is just going to kill her! You know he gets crazy when he's fighting!"

Okita scoffed. The idea of Okita possibly killing her, even if they were practicing was an awfully realistic image.

"Heisuke!" Kondou sternly.

"He has a point though," Sannan said, "you said so yourself that he didn't stop until he was told to."

"Eh—?" Okita sighed, "I said that I would have her in my care, and I can't even teach her how to fight?" He sounded calm, and a bit disappointed. It sounded deceiving at the same time.

This time it was Shinpachi who interrupted, "A little kid like you trying to teach Kira-chan? Hahaha! She would knock you down in one hit!" He laughed.

Kira found that hard to believe, since Heisuke was probably more skilled than she'll ever be— with a sword at least. So she remained silent as she listened to the conversation.

Heisuke responded with the same loud voice, "At least I'm not ancient

like you!"

"What did you just say?!"

Sanosuke laughed arrogantly, "Ha! If anything, I'm the better fighter than all of you!"

Kira sighed inwardly. _Is it always like this?_

She was brought out of her trance as quickly as she entered it when Heisuke asked her, "Hey, Kira-chan! Who do you think is better?"

Hijikata yelled. "All of you, shut up!"

Kira then looked at Saito, who didn't say anything much. His eyes were slightly lowered, indicating that either he was bored, or annoyed. Possibly both.

An awkward interval of silence filled the room, something that Kira, unfortunately, had grown used to, even though she was only here for a day and a half.

â€|

After about an hour, they all left the room, and Kira was grateful. She couldn't stand to sit anymore, because she would usually be up on her feet, dancing for the long hours. She nearly stumbled out of the room!

She was back at the littleâ€| backyard, she guessed, and was happy to see the sun and blue sky. Being cooped up in a room like that didn't suit her. Her thoughts trailed to her iPod, which was still in her pocket, but she wanted to save the battery. Sighing, she rested her head on a wooden beam that supported the ceiling, down the ground. With one knee popped and one hand on her arm.

"_That_ bored, huh?" Okita asked as he took a seat right next to where she was standing.

Again, she jumped, more like her shoulders went up for half a second. She looked at him, he was leaning back, with both hands behind him on the floor. He looked relaxed, and Kira felt a pang of jealousy. If anything, being relaxed was the one thing that she hasn't done since she got here.

"Eh," she shrugged. "Personally, I didn't understand why I had to be includedâ€|"

"Because you were involved in today's events," Saito replied next to her.

Oh my God! Is today Sneak-up-on-Kira Day?!

"Hmmm," that was all she said.

"By the way, you never responded to Heisuke's question," Okita said.

"Yeah! Just because Hijikata-san interrupted doesn't mean that you're

off the hook just yet, Kira-chan!" Heisuke said as he jumped off of the wooden pathway and in front of Kira.

She wanted to scream. Seriously, it was getting annoying! Being snuck up on like that, even if they didn't know it.

She slid down and folded her right leg underneath her left, which was now hanging off of the wooden porch. "Reallyâ€|?" She sighed.

Heisuke laughed as he folded his arms. "Yep!"

"She doesn't have to answer if she doesn't want to," Saito said calmly.

"Oi, did Kira-chan say who was the better fighter yet?" Shinpachi asked.

Oh. My. God! I swear if this happens one more timeâ€"

"Hope I didn't miss it!" Sanosuke added.

Kira face-palmed inwardly. _Never mind. _She gave up and sighed. "Honestly," she started. "I have no idea." She shrugged her shoulders.

"Ehh?" Heisuke sighed, "C'mon, Kira-chan!"

"Well, I wouldn't know. I haven't seen any of you fight," she said as she looked at the three, who were dying to know who was the better fighter.

Saito then said forwardly, "Since you'll be a messenger, you said you've never held a sword before?"

The three, Heisuke, Sanosuke and Shinpachi, sighed in a unison, realizing that the subject had been changed.

Kira nodded, "Never. Well," her gaze averted to the sky and then back at Saito, "technically 'yes' if you count swinging a toy sword around."

He didn't look very happy when he heard that. "Swords aren't used for play. Why would you have 'toy swords' anyways?"

"Eh," she shrugged, realizing that he wasn't the type to keep an argument, and if there was, she had a feeling he would win. Nonetheless, she explained, "We don't use real swords in my country. Time. Periodâ€|?" She couldn't find the right word to describe where she came from.

"Huh? So how do your men fight from where you come from?" Sanosuke asked.

"Guns." She replied bluntly.

"Well, come on, Kira-chan!" Heisuke grinned at her.

"What?" She looked at him with confusion.

"Let's see if fooling around helped you!" He laughed.

Her heart, along with her stomach justâ€¦ fell. _Oh God. I'm going to get killed. This is just damaging my pride even moreâ€¦" do I have any pride left? _Kira remembered the time when Okita had to teach her how to use chopsticks, and how her pride just went downhill. "Butâ€¦!" She protested.

"Ah, c'mon," Okita smirked, "it would be nice to know if I don't have to kill you if you're in the way."

This world is trying to kill meâ€¦

* * *

><p>Ta da! Kira is going through so much in one day. Well, that's what she gets for being a modern girl to get teleported to the Shinsengumi era. I wonder when she's going to crack, because I have so many outcomes, and I can't choose! ; ;

So, to answer possible questions:

Yes, I know she still has her modern clothes, and you'll just have to read the future chapters to see if she actually gets a change of clothes. I think they'll have to eventually anyways.

The reason why she got in this mess in the first place will be explained in later chapters. Not sure exactly when though.

**Oh, and I'll get to the story about the girl who disappeared when Kira arrived. **

And the entire reason why I made this story, the relationship between Okita and Kira will bloom, eventually. Not right now of course. You guys know how Okita is at first, cold and cruel.

Well, thanks for reading another chapter! Happy Holidays! Merry Christmas, or whatever you celebrate! Consider this as a present, I guess!

R&R!

4. Behind the Shadows

Okay, sorry for such a late update *shame on me!* I just got busy! OnO But I'm sure you don't care about my excuses though, so I'm just going to justâ€¦ go read please!

Oh, I have mid-terms this coming week so I'm just dying all over the place!

* * *

><p>After minutes of pointless arguing, Kira finally conformed and reluctantly agreed to fight, or 'spar' as what Heisuke told her.<p>

Turns out, they weren't going to use real swords, and Kira was

relieved, but the idea of sparring even though she had no idea what she was doing wasn't a walk in the park either.

"So, it's simple. Just disarm your opponent, or knock them to the ground. Whichever works," Heisuke said as placed the wooden blade on his shoulder with a grin.

Kira sighed as she tightened her grip on the wooden sword.

He then posed, with the sword aimed towards her body, "Ready?"

No?! "Uh, maybe?" She never felt so excited, yet nervous.

He then lunged forward.

Kira picked up her sword, only to have it clash with his. In the rush, she exclaimed, "Shit!" Kira didn't usually swear unless she's either terrified or angry. Really angry. This was no exception.

She could feel the strength Heisuke put on that strike. It was much more intense than her friends' attacks. Kira felt like her arms were going to disintegrate if she had to deflect another attack like that! Her arms shook, as a matter-of-fact.

He brought the sword down, bringing her with it, both putting pressure on each side. He spoke through the crossed swords, "Give up already, Kira-chan?" he asked with a grin.

"No!" She pulled back and stepped to the right, only feeling the edge of the sword brush against her side. She could even feel a gust of wind in its wake. "Seriously! Are you trying to kill me?!"

"Relax," he chuckled, "it's not like I'm going to really _hurt_ you!" He replied.

Their swords clashed again.

He was pretty strong. To think if his strength was this high, then the others would be ten times as that!

"Having fun?"

She scoffed, "Does it look like it?"

He shrugged, "Just wondering."

They pulled back, and after a series at attempts at slashing each other, Heisuke doing more of the slashing, he managed to get her. Right on her bandaged arm.

Ow! Kira winced and immediately dropped the sword. It landed with a _thunk!_ and she knelt down, holding her covered wound.

"Oh! Sorry, Kira-chan!" Heisuke exclaimed as he dropped his as well, crouching, trying to comfort her.

"Great, now you really did it!" Sanosuke scolded.

Kira smirked inwardly and grabbed the sword she dropped, pushing

Heisuke off of his balance. H did and fell back with a thud.

She slowly got up and towered over him with a satisfied smile.

They were all silent.

"Before you say that that was foul play, I still could've stabbed you with my other handâ€¦" _or worse._

"Ha ha! She beat you!" Shinpachi roared of laughter.

Kira sighed and plopped down beside Heisuke.

"Iâ€¦ that's cruel, Kira-chan!" He exclaimed as he sat up. "I thought I actually hurt you!" He sounded a bit angry, and it was now gnawing at Kira.

She blinked, "Well," she felt guilty and mustered up a few words, "it _did_ hurt. But for only half a second." She added.

Heisuke sat up and folded his arms, "Still! That wasn't funny!"

"Well, at least we know you can defend yourself." Saito said.

That was just a wooden sword thoughâ€¦

Heisuke's voice brought her back from her daydream, "Your arm! It's bleeding!" He exclaimed.

She looked at the bandage that was slowly collecting blood on the other side. "It's covered, so it's fine. It's not like it's going to get infected."

"I thought you didn't like blood," Okita countered.

"If there's a ridiculous amount, then yeah. Small cuts, that's fine." And then she rememberedâ€¦ thatâ€¦_ thing_ that attacked her when she first got here. Covered in blood with a twisted grin, with the eyes of crimson and white hair that was dotted with the same red. Its laugh echoed through her ears and she shivered.

"Kira-chan?"

She wasn't sure who said her name. She couldn't tear away from the terrifying images. "Andâ€¦ what was that thing? It attacked me when I got here. It also wore the same uniformâ€¦" she did her best not to stutter. She felt bad for dampening the mood, but she couldn't banish the thought away.

This time, she didn't hear a response. They were all silent.

"Guysâ€¦?" She watched as they exchanged looks with each other, making her feel left out.

"If you tell her without my consent, there's a guarantee that I would kill you all," Hijikata growled.

Kira jumped, only to see Hijikata stepping out of one of the rooms.

His scary side was back again, and it was enhanced.

"Ah, Hijikata-san!" Heisuke exclaimed.

"Relax, we didn't say anything," Okita put up his hands in defense.

She couldn't restrain herself any longer, so she asked, "What's up with this secret? Is it _that_ bad?"

The guys, minus Hijikata, simultaneously averted their gaze. Kira then wished she just kept quiet. Hijikata responded, "Something that should've never been possible."

Now, she really wanted to have kept her mouth shut, but it was too late. "So, are you going to tell me, or not?"

He sighed, "That 'thing' that attacked youâ€¦"

Kira nearly leaned in so she could hear the rest of it.

"Is a demon. A Rasetsu."

_A whatâ€¦? _ "A demonâ€¦?"

"It was an experiment gone wrong."

Kira then asked, "And it was wearing the same thingâ€¦ are you guysâ€¦"

"No. We're not." Saito said.

She was surprised to hear a sudden response from Saito. Almost making them look guiltier. It was like a messed up sci-fi movie, an experiment going horribly wrong, causing havoc in the city. But how did they manage to do that?! Extreme hypnotizing? An unknown drug?

"Those demons have incredible speed, strength and enhanced healing abilities. But it's hard to control them. I was hoping that you wouldn't bring it up too," Hijikata muttered.

Kira wanted to shrink back and crawl into a corner, considering that this subject seemed like one that wasn't brought up a lot. But she pressed on, curiosity getting to her. "So that's why you didn't want me to leaveâ€¦?"

"That and because you don't know the area. It's too dangerous," he said.

_That just sounded like heâ€¦ caredâ€¦ _

"Well, now that you know, you better keep quiet about this," Okita said. He gave her a devious grin, "Or I'll kill you."

She nodded once, "Got it." With him threatening to kill someone almost constantly, she assumed it was normal, since the guys didn't really react to it. But she was glad that she knew a few things that got her into this mess. But the thought of how, and why she got here was still a mystery to her, and it would remain for a

while.

â€|

With her arm re-bandaged, thanks to Sannan, she wandered about the headquarters, since she didn't want to go on patrol right now, since she was so hungry, and because she had nothing much to do. Kira _had_ thought of practicing her dance, but the room she used earlier was now filled with a bunch of men practicing using the sword, and she didn't want to dance in her room, nor dance outside.

And then the scent something cooking filled her nose. Her stomach immediately growled. Must be dinner time. She pulled out her iPod and checked the clock. 7:03 A.M.â€ wait, that's not right. Guess her iPod clock didn't change when she magically went to Japan. And what was worse was that she didn't know what the real time was. Sighing, she shoved her iPod back into her pocket, and she started to follow the smell of food.

Eventually, her curious nose reached a sliding door. Opening it slightly, the smell became stronger. She nearly swooned. Food never smelled this good before.

"If you're just going to stand there, why don't you just come in and help?" Okita asked as he started to chop something that looked unknown to Kira.

She jumped. _How did he know I was there?!_ "Uh," she mumbled as she quickly went inside what looked like a kitchen, closing the door behind her. The kitchen had what looked like stoveâ€| with a fire that consumed the wood that cracked every now and then. On theâ€| stove, Heisuke was stirring something in a pan. What sat in the pan was what looked like chunks of meat, or maybe it was something else. The food that was in the pan was unknown to her, but it smelled delicious either way.

"Oh, hey, Kira-chan!" Heisuke exclaimed, taking his eyes off of the pan for half a second to meet her gaze.

"Hi." She said as she smiled lightly. "That smells really good. Just saying." She said as her eyes lingered on the pan.

"Hah, you think so?" He grinned.

She nodded, and then her eyes trailed to Okita, who was chopping away. "And how did you know I was there?"

He smirked, but he didn't look at her. He scraped the chopped vegetable into a pan as he replied, "Let's just say I'm very observant."

Kira rolled her eyes as she shook her head. "Anyways, you two make the food?" She couldn't exactly believe that just Heisuke and Okita prepared all of the food.

"Nah, we just alternate." Okita replied. _That makes sense._

Heisuke asked. "Wanna help out?"

"Wellâ€|" she thought for a moment. "I guess." She

shrugged.

â€|

Throughout the time she helped make dinner, she just helped cutting vegetables and various items, since she didn't know how to make the entire meal. The two teased her for not knowing how to make food, which wasn't true in her point of view. She could make hamburgers, spaghetti, etc. Just not Japanese foodâ€| besides rice, but she just had to put that in a rice cooker, so that didn't really count.

During dinner time, she was surprised how good the food turned out, and she wasn't a big of a fail as she thought she would be. Kira also learned that she was going to out and patrol with Sano and Shinpachi, which she didn't mind much. She knew that these two were pretty crazy togetherâ€| even crazier when Heisuke was around, so it wasn't like she would be walking around with unemotional people.

The sun was now gone, and the stars that hung suspended by invisible strings were mini lights in the sky. A few stray clouds covered the moon and the small suns. The empty roads of the city were filled with the men walking around, swords ready to be drawn. Their footsteps echoing off of the walls, filling the quiet town.

Kira walked in between Sano and Shinpach. She had some bandages wrapped around her feet to prevent anymore blisters, and it felt amazing to not walk with burning feet.

Shinpachi pointed at a corner, "Hey, Kira-chan. That's where I found you."

Both Harada and Kira looked at the alleyway that Shinpachi was pointing at. It sounded like was talking to a pet. The alley didn't look very familiar, since almost all of them looked the same to Kira. She still couldn't believe that it was two days since she was here. "And then I ran away from you," she added.

Harada chuckled. "I can probably guess why."

"Hey!" Shinpachi protested. "She was probably freaked out!"

"I was." She replied honestly. Kira glanced at her bandaged arm. Being attacked by a Rasetsu definitely made her terrified, one, she nearly got killed, and two, it meant that this is all real. It's not a dream, so if she messed up in this world, then she would be gone.

"So how are your feet doing?" Harada asked.

"Uh," she glanced for half a second at her bandaged feet. "Well, it doesn't hurt right nowâ€| so I guess they're fine."

And then she saw a shift of shadows in a nearby alley by the corner of her eye. She slowed her pace and put her attention to the alley. What was that? She shook her head. Maybe I'm just paranoid. Her heartbeat picked up as her mind wandered back to the memory of the Rasetsu. Kira shivered and unconsciously brought her hand to her bandaged arm.

"You okay, Kira-chan?" Shinpachi asked.

Tearing her eyes away from the alley, she refused to look him in the eye. Kira put her focus on the road ahead of her. "Iâ€|" she shook her head. "Thought I saw something."

"You won't have to worry," Harada grinned. "You have a dozen men with you, so it's no problem."

Kira nodded once. "Yeah." She couldn't help but take a second glance at the alley where she saw the shadow move. It seemed to be a bit too big for a small animal, so it was definitely a person. Maybe they were being followedâ€" _Oh my God, Kira! Calm down!_

â€|

A man with blond hair and blood, red eyes stood atop of a building, far enough for the men on the ground to not see him. He stood in an arrogant stance, with his one hand on his swords. A smirk curled the corners of his mouth.

"Kazama-sama," another man said with long, brick red hair, who was dressed in a black robe. "This is the girl, correct?"

"Yes." Kazama replied bluntly.

"Well, why don't you just nab her and go?" A man said with a twisted grin. He had dark blue hair, almost purple, which was held in a ponytail.

"Hmpf. Let those dogs have their fun with the new girl." He said in a low voice. "And it wouldn't be much of a fight."

"But that girl is the key for new opportunities. If you wait too long, she'll just accidentally kill herself. She did say that she wasn't accustomed to this world." He argued back.

"Just let have Kazama-sama have his way for now," the other man replied calmly.

"The girl isn't that oblivious." Kazama replied. His eyes followed the girl in the strange clothing as she walked with the others in the city. "And it's not like we won't find her again."

"I just wanna know why she would do something like that to begin with."

"Why question it? She gave us demons the greatest opportunity that is yet to be taken."

He just scoffed as he folded his arms.

"Relax, Shiranui," Kazama said. "We'll take her soon enough."

* * *

><p>Oh my goodness...THIS IS SO SHORT! I apologize! I am disappointed in myself, but I just can't seem to think of anything else!

** This is kind of a filler, minus the little introduction of Kazama and friends at the end. Anyways, again, I'm sorry for the late update and for the really pathetically short chapter. Truth is, I have the major points of the plot all charted outâ€¦ I just need fillers, or chapters that help transition into them! If any of you are kind enough, would you mind giving me some ideas for fillers? That would be wonderful! But I promise the next few chapters will actually move the story along! PROMISE!**

I have mid-terms this week, so expect a 2 week dead-ness from now on. I need to study my butt off, and then recover from the tests. ^^

**Thanks for reading! Don't forget to review~! **

5. Mysteries

DOTH MY EYES DECEIVE ME?! It's another update! I am so sorry! It's been ages and here is my list of excuses, but I highly doubt that they are decent:

Okay guysâ€¦ my supposed 2 week break extendedâ€¦ by a lot. Partially due to procrastination and because I'm getting busy with tennis, and I barely have enough time or energy to do anything. Writer's block is blamed for this too. SO, sorry for the EXTREMELY long wait. And this is an even _shorter_ chapter and I am just so disappointed and frustrated. It's better than nothing though!

* * *

><p>It had been a week since she suddenly appeared in this time, and joined the Shinsengumi. She learned a bit more about the customs, but certainly didn't practice them. Kira also learned the basic layout of Kyoto, so she wasn't afraid of getting lost so easily. With all of the ups to thisâ€¦ there were the downs.<p>

Kira eventually had to wash her hair. She had to actually take a bathâ€¦and being the only _girl_ made it a bit tricky. She couldn't describe how _awkward_ it was. The first time she took a bath thereâ€¦ she never wanted to remember it, but it always seemed to come back, like a stubborn rash that would always come back right after it cleared.

As she was soaking, she heard the door open and heard footsteps. There were no voices, so she couldn't tell who was walking in. But eventually, she saw the face of Okita. And things just went downhill from there.

"Shit! What the hell are you doing?!" Kira exclaimed as she tried to cover herself. The water splashed with her frantic movement.

_ Okita glanced at her for just half a second before closing her eyes and smiling. "Oh! Sorry for the intrusion! I didn't know you would be in here!"_

_ "Just get out!" She screeched as her cheeks flared up. _Ohmigod, ohmigod, ohmigod, stop standing there and get out! _"Ever heard of knocking?!"_

_ He finally turned around and chuckled lightly, "It's nice to finally get a reaction out of you." _

Damnit. He _knew_ I was in here! _"Get out before I kill you!" She yelled back._

_ "Hey, that's my line," he mused before finally leaving, closing the door behind him._

It was kind of like how a guy would steal a girl's first kiss and they would go ballistic, but on a much larger scale.

Kira would still blush even after a few days passed after that incident. Even when they had meals, Okita seemed to somehow bring it up, and she would just bite her lip to prevent herself from lashing out, swearing and blushing at the same time. He wouldn't. Stop. Teasing her.

Eating the rice out of the bowl, the guys around her were talking about random subjects, which she forced herself to stay out of, so she just remained focused on eating her food. But then a sentence came out of Okita's mouth.

_ "Heh, you know Kira-chan, you don't have to avoid me. I _did_ see you in the bath," he smirked._

_ Kira took in a huge sigh, tightening her grip on the bowl. The entire room went silent, followed by Saito replying, "Please, Okita-san, refrain from saying such things. She's already been through a lot."_

_ She sighed and looked down at her bowl._

As she finished her dance routine, Heisuke, Sanosuke and Shinpachi burst into the large room, all yelling out in unison, "Kira-chaaan~!"

>Kira looked at them, all with goofy grins on their faces. She was afraid to even ask what was going on. "Uhâ€| yeah?"<p>

"Come with us!" Heisuke said.

>"Why?" She drawled out as she lifted an eyebrow at him.
"Just come on!" Sanosuke and Shinpachi said as they grabbed her arms and led her out, and she didn't have much reaction time.

â€|

The sun beat down on Kira as she walked with Heisuke, Sanosuke, Shinpachi andâ€| Okita in the town. The stares that she was given were nerve wracking, not to mention just awkward for Kira. Yeah, she still had her modern clothes on, so she assumed that she would get the stares, but she never knew how intense the stares were. It wasn't like running around through Kyoto, because she didn't really pay attention, but this time, she was walking.

"So, what exactly are we doing? You're not doing your rounds," she said to no one directly.

>"Hmm," Okita placed his hands behind his head, "well, if you're gonna be staying here with us, you might as well blend in."<p>

How blunt can you get?

"Ah, I gotcha," Kira nodded.

As they walked around, they saw a few stands selling food to baskets. Kira took in her surroundings, completely oblivious of what, or who was in front of her.

A squeal, followed by a hug, more like a tackle, snapped Kira out of her daydream. "Mi-chan!" The girl exclaimed as she squeezed Kira. Kira was sure that her ribs would break. This girl was _strong_.

Kira started to gasp for breath and the girl finally released her. The guys looked at the two.

"Friend of yours?" Heisuke asked.

The girl nodded without giving a chance for Kira to respond. "Yeah! She went missing, but I found her!" I mean, _you_ found her!" She bowed to the guys. "Thank you so much! I was so worried about her!"

"Wait!" Kira put up her hands in defense. "Slow down here. I'm _not_ who you think I am."

She faced Kira and this time gave her a good look. Kira did the same. The girl had dark brown hair that was tied in a low pony tail. Her eyes were a piercing blue shade. She wore a pale blue yukata. The girl furrowed her brows, and her smile faded. "Oh!" her voice sounded dejected. "You're not Mi-chan." She took a few steps back.

"Wait a minute, Miss." Sanosuke said. "You said your friend is missing?"

She nodded. "Yes, about a week ago!" her name is Fukui Miho." she looked back at Kira. "And you looked so familiar and I couldn't help myself," she bowed at Kira. "I am so sorry!"

"Huh?" Kira shook her hands at the girl. "You don't need to apologize."

She straightened a bit and said, "Then again!" your clothes look a bit funny." She widened her eyes. "Oh! Sorry, I forgot to introduce myself. My name is Hayashi Akina." Akina turned to the guys. "And you must be the Shinsengumi."

"Wow, even without our uniforms people recognize us!" Shinpachi exclaimed.

"I like to observe," Akina replied.

"I'm Kira," she said.

Okita asked Kira, "So, you _don't_ know this girl?"

She shook her head.

"Well, we can be friends regardless!" Akina said with a smile. It was amazing how quickly she rebounded off of being so

disappointed.

"Well, Kira-chan is from overseas, and we decided to take her shopping. I don't suppose you can help us?" Sanosuke asked Akina.

"Of course I can!" She said as she looked at Kira. "She does stick out like a sore thumb" her voice trailed off.

"Thanks, that makes me feel a lot better," Kira nodded.

Okita chuckled. "At least you're with another girl. Shopping for clothes isn't really my thing," he smirked.

Kira didn't want to imagine what Okita had in mind if Akina didn't come along and nearly tackle her to the ground.

"Let's go then!" Shinpachi grinned.

â€|

They all went to a store, Akina and Kira were looking around to find the right yukata for her, while the guys lingered close by. Sanosuke, Heisuke and Shinpachi were laughing at something, but Kira didn't bother on figuring out what it was they were laughing about.

Okita pointed to one on the racks. "How about this one?"

Kira looked at him with an exasperated reply, "I told you for the fourth time! I don't like pink!" She whimpered a bit at the last few words.

"Eh? But you're wearing pink right now!" Akina pointed out the salmon and navy blue striped shirt Kira had on.

"That's different! I don't like all out pink. Besides, salmon has an orange tinge to it!" Kira defended.

Okita chuckled.

"Why don't you just try one pink one?" Akina asked as she held up the pink yukata.

Might as wellâ€| or he would be bugging her about it. "Fineâ€|" Kira muttered.

In the dressing room, Akina helped Kira put on the yukata. It was so much work, compared to slipping on a shirt and jeans before heading out the door. She wondered if she would be able to put this on herself, but Akina mentioned that a kimono was even more work, since it had much more layers.

The yukata was pink. Something Kira wasn't very fond of, but if it would get Okita off her back, then she would suffer through the minutes.

Kira finally stepped out, only to find her entire group standing in front of her.

"Wow, Kira-chan looks so cute!" Heisuke grinned.

"I agree!" Shinpachi added.

"You should've been in these clothes earlier," Sanosuke said.

Akina followed Kira and smiled. "Doesn't she look so cute? A lot better than the other clothes she had on!"

Kira muttered, "Those clothes are normal from where I'm from." The whole clothes situation was starting to tap dance on her last few nerves.

"So what do you think?" Akina asked Okita.

_Why?! Why did you have to ask _him?!_

"Hmm," Okita folded his arms and grinned lightly. "Told you pink would look good on you, Kira-chan."

Kira wanted to crawl into a hole. Or at least cover a blush that was for sure visible. "No! Pink is not my color!"

"It suits that cute face of yours though," Okita mused.

All eyes were on her now. Great.

"Aww, Kira-chan is blushing!" Akina giggled.

"S-shut up!" Kira said before she stormed back into the room, Akina followed in after her. She wasn't used to having this much attention—this close at least. During her recitals it didn't really matter, since the audience was sitting in the dark and she didn't pay much attention to them.

"So, let's try on the other ones!" Akina said as she closed the door behind them.

"Anything is better than this pink one—" Kira muttered.

"Ehhh? But that one man certainly liked that one!"

"And?" Kira didn't want to walk around in something she didn't like, especially if Okita liked it.

Akina sighed, "Alright. I understand."

Time ticked away, and Kira finally decided to get a light green yukata, completely erasing the image of that pink one Okita insisted that she should try on. Akina seemed to be siding with Okita already, trying to get her to buy the pink one instead, but Kira stood firm. But she had a feeling that Akina wasn't done yet. Despite all of that, Kira felt a bit glad. She managed to make a friend, and it was a girl this time.

Akina was different from Bryn and Casy, and it relieved Kira. She missed home, and her friends. Today, Kira actually forgot that she was from a different time and was enjoying herself.

—

Everyone gathered in the room to eat dinner. To Kira's relief, it wasn't as crazy.

"I see that you've got new clothes," Kondou said to Kira.

She nodded and looked at him. "Yeah. Guess I won't stand out so much."

"Oh, Kondou-san," Sanosuke said. "When we were out there, some girl suddenly showed up and thought that Kira was the missing girl."

Hijikata looked up this time.

"Is that so," Kondou said.

"Did the girl say anything about the missing one?" Hijikata asked as he glanced at Kira.

Kira shook her head. "Nothing, other than her name. Fukui Miho I think."

"Well, now we have a name." Kondou said.

"Next time you see this girl, I want you to find out more about the missing girl," Hijikata said as he looked at Kira and then at the four that had been with her. "Maybe we can figure out why this happened in the first place," he finished.

Kira felt a little bad. Her new friend was going to be interrogated. She didn't exactly want to give off the impression that she befriended Akina just so she could find out more about Miho. Nonetheless, she nodded. One thing's for sure, she wanted to find out why all of this happened to her.

* * *

><p>Another short chapter, but this was more a filler, thanks to one of my readers! Thanks so much for the idea! Kira's going to be one busy girl now! And I apologize for the delay. Really. Procrastination and writers' block don't mix. So, what are your thoughts on Akina? And the name of our mysterious missing girl has been revealed! So many mysteries now!

** I have spring break right now, so I **_**might**_** post the next chapter. **_**Might**_**. So I hope you guys enjoyed this chapter! Thanks R&R~!**

6. Glinting Eyes

Woo~ Another chapter~ So I hope you'll enjoy this chapter, since I had a blast writing it! Summer break is around the corner, so look forward to more updates!

~Jen

* * *

><p>The night sky was dotted with stars, the new moon blended with

the black ocean. It was a calm night, a mild breeze rustled the leaves and the blades of the grass.<p>

Kazama sat on a tree branch, listening to the peace the pathetic humans would disrupt during the day. His crimson eyes looked up at the sky, and then at the headquarters the girl was residing in. He kept a close eye on her, but not too close to get caught by those annoying _samurai_.

He knew exactly when he was going to pluck the girl off, he just needed to wait. Blinking slowly, he jumped down from the branch, landing quietly. His messy golden hair ruffled a bit in the breeze, but he paid no attention to it.

Maybe he would visit the girl for a minute, or two.

â€|

Kira was fast asleep on the futon, her hands placed in front of her face, and she was resting on her side. Her breathing was soft.

_She was sitting in a park, or a grassy field. And she saw Okita, he was talking to her, but it was murmurs. Why was she dreaming about him, she didn't know. Also, she couldn't understand what he was saying. She blinked, and turned her head, finding a silhouette of a person. She wasn't sure about the gender. It spoke to her too.

_

_They were just words smashed and rearranged. Absolute gibberish. But this one word, 'choice' was the only thing decipherable to Kira's ears. The rest was as if she was underwater. _

She wanted to talk, but it seemed like she couldn't control herself. She remained silent and looked at Okita and then back at the shadow.

_Taking a step forward, she fell. The grassy field vanished, a black space replaced it. She didn't scream, but she looked down as she fell. She saw nothing. Kira felt no wind brushing against her as she fell, but the top of her felt like she was being pushed. Pushed further, and further down. _

Kira snapped her eyes open, the falling sensation remained for a while before it faded away. Her eyes darted to the edge of her futon. She was on the ground, she _couldn't_ fall. She hated when that would happen.

She sighed and switched sides, closing her eyes and snuggling up with the blanket.

And then she heard a faint creak. Her shoulders twitched and she slowly opened her eyes.

There, standing behind the door, she could see the shadow of a man. She could see a faint red glow. Two of them actually. They looked like a pair of eyes. It was as if she could feel them shooting daggers at her.

Kira widened her eyes, holding back a gasp and sat up quickly. Her world around her spun a bit for getting up too quickly, but she

didn't mind it. What she did mind was the shadow. It freaked her out. It wasn't her imagination.

Who the hell is he? Maybe it was one of the guys. She slowly got up, now in her sleeping yukata, and quietly slid the door open, nearly gasping again.

No one.

She could've sworn she saw someone! She shivered despite the warm air. Her eyes flickered to the futon, but she didn't retreat back inside. Instead, she stepped out and sat on the edge of the walkway. The grass tickled her toes. Resting her head against the beam, she let out a soft sigh and looked up, trying to look for the moon.

"It's a new moon." A voice said behind her. Okita's.

Kira jumped, but tried not to show her surprise. "Ohâ€|" her voice was soft and fresh, since she just woke up.

She could hear his footsteps coming closer, and then they stopped. Okita leaned against the beam. He too was in a sleeping yukata. "So, what are you doing up so late?" His voice was gentle, but she could sense his usual grin.

"Justâ€|" she paused. A dream? She thought she saw someone tooâ€|

"Just what? You had a nightmare?" A teasing ring tainted his voice.

"No," she said in a quick, hushed tone. "I just suddenly woke up."

"Whatever you say, Kira-chan." He sighed. "Always filled with mysteries."

"I could be saying the same thing for you," she looked up at him for the first time since their conversation started. Even without any decent lighting, she could still see him.

He looked down at her and folded his arms. He made a 'hmpf' sound before looking back up at the sky. "I just wanted to get some fresh air."

"Because that sounds believable."

"You don't have to."

A few minutes of silence ticked away. The two were just staring out at the grass, the sky and the stars.

Letting her train of thought wander wherever it please, she suddenly asked, "Are the nights always calm here?" She instantly wanted to smack herself for such a dumb question.

Okita looked at her, a bit surprised. His green eyes averted from her gaze then and looked at the stars. "Why? From where you're from is it the opposite?"

"Kind of." Cars still roaming up and down the streets, streetlights on, the screams of teens exploring the world beyond their curfew. Yeah, it was different.

"Usually it's calm I guess. I don't really pay much attention to it. But at night, in town, it's pretty hectic." He said with a shrug of his shoulders.

She wandered through her thoughts. Her life in the United States. The huge differences between the two countries and time periods. It was then when her name rung in her ears for a few seconds, she broke free from her trance.

"Kira-chan!" He exclaimed, but not loud enough to stir anyone.

Kira blinked and looked back up at him. "Huh?"

"You were zoning out there."

"Oh. Sorry."

"Were you thinking about me?"

"No!" Her response just made her sound more suspicious.

A chuckle resonated through the hall. It was low. "Do you miss your home?"

She placed her hands behind her and leaned back on them. Her fingers picked at the small cracks in the wooden boards. "I try not to think about it. Considering it's halfway across the world." _And I'm from a different time._

A "hmm" was all that she heard from him.

She decided to continue, not wanting another interval of awkward silence. "Yeah, I get homesick once in a while. But there's enough to do here to keep my mind off things."

"Oh, really?"

Kira nodded. "Never knew that there is so much to do here."

"Now what's _that_ supposed to mean?" He lifted an eyebrow, and before she knew it, he took a seat next to her.

She tried to keep herself from stumbling over her words. "Well—I. Like, when you guys do your patrols and when I usually hang around here. That alone seems to pass time."

Another chuckle escaped his lips. It seemed genuine, and it seemed as if Kira could see the smile hidden with it. "Including the fact that you're the _only_ girl here at Headquarters. Am I right?"

She felt like crawling into a corner. She involuntarily blushed at the comment. "What—what's that's supposed to mean?!" Restraining her voice, so she wouldn't wake anyone, was getting harder.

His eyes glinted, like they were smiling. But he blinked and the

shine went away. "You know exactly what I mean, Kira-chan. Surrounded by all of these men, with no competition." He mused.

"Why would you even say that?!" It was nearly impossible to avoid his gaze. "Oh my God, you're insane!" she muttered.

A smirk curled his lips. "Oh, you actually reacted the way I wanted you to. You look so cute when you blush."

Her cheeks reddened. "Fricken! you know what? I'm gonna go!" She scrambled back up on her feet and quickly headed back to her room. When she closed the door behind her, she could still hear his chuckle linger in her ears.

Quickly walking back to her futon, she pulled the covers up to her shoulders and closed her eyes, forcing herself to fall asleep quickly.

!

Kira walked into the same room, to eat breakfast with everyone else. She couldn't sleep ever since her little talk with Okita. She could feel those green eyes just looking at her, including a pair of red ones. That's what really made her restless. The shadow of that man, the look it gave her, and how it completely vanished. For a moment she thought that it was Okita, but she clearly recalled that he had green and not red eyes.

With her brown to black hair combed, and faint circles under her eyes, she slid the door shut, only to see her food was already out, waiting for her.

"Morning Kira-chan!" Sano greeted her with a gentle smile.

She must've been glaring at him without her knowing it, because he lifted his eyebrow and then continued to eat. His smile erased.

"Why do you look so grumpy?" Heisuke asked before he took a big serving of rice.

Kira yawned and rubbed her eyes. "Sorry! I just had a rough night!" she walked to where her food was and sat down.

Her eyes darted to Okita, who just calmly ate his breakfast. He winked at her before taking another bite out of his food.

Breakfast went by rather quickly, but it wasn't long before she was asked to go to town to do an errand. This time it was to buy more food. She accepted without protesting, learning that it was just annoying and headed off. Kira was grateful, it would keep her mind off of last night. Honestly, what went through Okita's mind was beyond her comprehension.

Taking the main road and holding a list of groceries, with characters she didn't understand, she passed a few homes and buildings. Now wearing the right clothes, she didn't stick out like a sore thumb. But she still wasn't used to it. It was so hot and wearing this yukata that covered her entire body, with sleeves wasn't helping. The humid air hinted that it was going to rain soon.

Before she reached one of the vendors, a hand touched her shoulder. Kira whipped around, only to see none other than Akina. Her blue eyes glinted as she grinned. "Hey Kira-chan! Sorry if I startled you!" She said with a guilty smile as she took her hand back.

"Oh," she shook her head. "It's fine. What are you doing out here?"

"I was just dropping by to say hello to a family friend, and then I found you here!" Her smile widened.

"I'm just out shopping for some food." Kira gingerly held up the list. "But I can't understand it." She said shamefully.

Akina blinked and giggled. "Ehh, you really are from overseas. Here, let me help you," she said as she took the list out of Kira's hand. Kira waited for her to tell her what the items were. "Okay, it's not a lot." She said as she started to head to one of the vendors.

"H-hey! Wait for me!" Kira hurried behind her only to see Akina holding up a bag of vegetables. She saw them a few times in the kitchen, but she never learned the names of them. Kira quickly handed the man the money. "Here, I can carry it. I was sent out for the shopping."

"No, it's fine!" Her voice softened as she gave her a reassuring smile. "And no matter how many times you'll tell me that you can handle it, I won't give in."

Kira lifted an eyebrow at the girl. She was pretty nice. "Fine, just let me hold the second bag okay?"

"Yeah!" She nodded.

It didn't take long for the girls to be finished with the list, but they were so deep in town, Kira lost direction of where to go from here. She never had been this far in town. But the marketplace Kira always passed didn't have all of the things they needed. So they headed further in town. Kira held two small bags, while Akina carried the other one. She tossed the list away and looked at Kira, "Okay, let's head back!"

Kira made a mental note to avoid getting sent to do the shopping. Or maybe at least conveniently bump into Akina so she could read it. "Lead the way."

Before Akina could start walking, a middle-aged woman, with fine wrinkles and slowly graying hair, walked up to her. "A-akina! You're needed back home!

>I've been looking everywhere for you!" She was clearly out of breath. "You're mother stopped by and said you haven't returned! She's worried!"

She gasped. "Ahh! I completely forgot!" Akina had a panicked look across her face.

Feeling a bit guilty, Kira said, "Here, give me the bag. I can get back on my own." She wanted to kick herself for this.

"Eh?! But Kira-chan?"

Kira put on her best smile. "No, I don't want you to get in trouble. Besides, I know where to go." Lie.

Akina gave her an unsure look and then finally sighed. "Fine, fine! I'm really sorry, Kira-chan! I'll see you later then, yeah?" She handed the bag to Kira in one swift move before hurrying into the crowd of people, disappearing instantly. The woman also seemed to have wandered off.

Kira looked to her left and right. Both sides looked the same with all of the vendors and buildings. Dammit. Where did she have to go?

She even asked people for directions, but they were of no use to her. They said to turn at certain buildings, things she didn't exactly memorize. Lesson learned. Know your surroundings before you venture off.

The clouds above her were quickly deepening their gray hues, manifesting into larger, ominous ones.

She became frantic, but tried to compose her exterior. She headed down one way on the main road, but only resulted in reaching a fork in the road. Kira sighed and glanced over her shoulder. Maybe she could turn around and try to the run the other way before she would be drenched.

The temptation was gnawing at her, but it quickly went away when a low rumble was heard echoing through the sky. People quickly walked to buildings for shelter, making the road practically barren.

Dammit all she groaned and decided to choose the right path. Quickly heading down the path, her pace gradually picked up as she started to feel rain drops sprinkle her hands. The buildings disappeared, followed by a pair of walls on either side of her.

Without warning, thunder rolled through the sky, followed by a crackle of lightning. As if knocking down dominos, the rain followed immediately after.

"Dammit!" She exclaimed under her breath. Kira continued to walk, trying not to slip, no thanks to the dirt road, now quickly turning to mud.

Her grip tightened around the bags as she felt the same sensation when she was in her room. Like she was falling. Her walk slowed, but she continued to move. She could feel the hair on her arms and the back of her neck rise as the feeling increased.

"Finally, some action around here," a voice chuckled darkly above her. Kira immediately froze, and her eyes slowly trailed from the dirt road to a man standing on the top of a wall. Blue hair in a pony tail, followed by a menacing grin and a tattoo on his arm. Her eyes flickered to the guns at his side. He had his arms folded.

_What..!? _Kira instinctively turned around, and found a man with messy golden hair and red eyes looking at her. She nearly dropped all of her stuff. Those eyes that literally stared into her soul. The reason why she had a horrible night sleep. His eyebrows were slanted down, and an egoistic smirk curled the corners of his mouth.

Kazama.

"I was wondering when you would stop and turn around. Even if you're wearing clothes from this period, you still stick out," his baritone was menacing-sounding. It sent shivers down her spine, no thanks to the rain, which had successfully soaked her.

"W-who the hell are you?" Her voice shook, but she remained firm.

"First time a female spoke to him like that," the one of the roof snickered.

"It's not like it would matter," Kazama replied. "Once this is all over, we can just toss her away. She's worth nothing more." He said darkly.

Kira took a few steps back, surprised to hear another voice behind her. "I apologize. But you aren't leaving." Trapped.

She didn't bother on turning around. "What the hell do you want from me?!"

"You wouldn't be able to handle so much information in one day, my dear." The same voice from behind her replied.

"It's not like you have a chance at escaping. Just come with us without a struggle. It'll save time," Kazama said as he took a step closer to her.

The three, Kazama, Shiranui and Amagiri, had her cornered. No where to run. But she wasn't going to give up, even though she was terrified, not to mention freezing and drenched. "As if I'm going with you!" Kira exclaimed as she threw the items at him and ran.

It was so hard to run in the yukata, and the slippery surface didn't help. With the rain now pelting her face, making her skin sting, she darted down the path, only to be stopped again by Shiranui, he had her at gunpoint. Kira immediately stopped running and immediately backed up.

"What do you want from me?! Can't you just leave me alone?!" She asked no one in particular. They all seemed the same.

Kazama's eyes seemed to glow, they were angry. He walked up to her and forcefully grabbed her chin so she had to look at him. "Humans are so annoying," he said through clenched teeth. "Why did you have to be the target? Out of all people, you were picked."

Target? Picked? Those two words lingered for a moment before she was snapped out of her daydream when he forcefully grabbed her arm. "I'm done with these games." He growled.

Before she could even scream, someone talked before her. "Hey, bastard! You're getting on my nerves!"

* * *

><p>Dun dun duuuuun! Thank you for the nice reviews! And this concludes another chapter! Wow, I'm on a roll! Updating two stories in one month! :O I hope you enjoyed this chapter and the little Kira & Okita scene!

7. The Games

I would like to thank you guys for all of these reviews! They make me so happy! I'm quite surprised that I updated this so quickly! O.O

Guest-Thank you! And when he means 'target', well, you'll just have to stick around for that ;3 Believe me, there will be more fluff later on!

Lily- Well here you go, hope you enjoy! :3

Ainhoa11-Gahh, the puppy eyesâ€| they're too irresistible! Here's the chapter!

Carissa-Thank you for the nice review!

And now we will know the hero of Kira! I don't own Hakuokiâ€|sadly.

* * *

><p>Kazama lifted a golden brow and slowly looked away from Kira and then to the owner of the voice. He remained silent, but his angry, red eyes showed all of his anger. His two demon friends followed his silence, but Shiranui's gun moved from facing Kira to the person.<p>

She never felt so relieved. Her heart was hammering against her chest and hairs on the back of her neck stood straight up. Her arm was locked in an iron grip and she didn't dare move. She was too scared to tell who the owner of the voice was.

"Oh? Is this your friend?" Shiranui asked darkly.

"Yes! Now you leave Kira-chan alone!" The muffled voice in Kira's ears cleared, now revealing a lighter voice. Not even close to a man's tone.

Akina.

That brought her out of her trance roughly, kind of like being tied to a rope and pulled harshly only to crash into a brick wall. What was she doing here?! Akina was drenched too because of the rain. Her face didn't show a single sliver of fear.

Amagiri gave a look to Kazama, who just swore under his breath and ripped his hand away from Kira's arm. He straightened himself, his head held high as if he were superior and looked straight at Akina.

"I'm surprised none of those dogs came rushing in." His blood red eyes flickered to Kira, nearly making her shudder. "I'll be back." Was all he said before he jumped into the air, reaching heights no human could reach, and turning into a small wisp.

His friends disappeared too.

Akina quickly rushed to Kira and placed reassuring hands on her shoulder. "Kira-chan! Are you alright?! I'm so sorry I left you like that! I should've went with you!" Akina exclaimed as she squeezed Kira in another death hug. She would've fallen over if it weren't for Akina being the anchor.

Her sudden outburst made it difficult for Kira to follow along, but she patted the girl's soaked back. "I-I'm fine! Really!" Kira's heart felt like it was going to burst. She had never been so terrified and relieved at the same time.

A crash of thunder made the two girls jump a bit. "Oh! I'm so stupid! We need to get to shelter! The Shinsengumi Headquarters isn't far from here!" She didn't wait for an answer, because she was already pulling Kira along through all of the rain.

Those eyes, being the target, what did it all mean? Kira tried to wrap her brain around it all, but failed miserably. She was muddled with the thoughts and couldn't break away from them.

Before she knew it, the two girls were at the gates of the Headquarters. The rain suddenly increased. It was so much that Kira couldn't see anything past a few feet. They quickly went under the overhang and took in a few breaths. Kira could hear the rain drops slap the roofing above her. Water dripped from her nose and she was soaked from head to toe.

Akina was in the same condition. And then her hand covered her mouth when she sneezed. Thunder sounded just in time to mask over the small sneeze.

"Bless you!" Kira muttered.

"Kira," a voice that sounded like Saito's was behind her.

She slowly turned her head.

"They were starting to get worried," he said. He glanced at Akina, and then back at her.

"Hey Saito-san, have you seen?" Heisuke's voice came from the other side. When he passed the corner and saw the two girls, he widened his eyes. "Kira-chan! You're back! We were getting worried! Are you alright?!"

"Heisuke-kun, the two girls are drenched. They need to dry off, so stop gawking. I'll go tell Hijikata-san." He said neutrally. He didn't sound as surprised as Heisuke was. Saito slowly turned and went back the way he came.

!

The two girls, now changed into dry clothes, with warm cups of tea in

their hands, sat in the room, along with the rest of the guys. Kira didn't drink the tea, she just let it warm her frigid hands.

They sat across from Hijikata, who looked stressed enough. The rest of the guys were seated against the wall.

"I'm glad I finally get to talk to you, Hayashi-san." Hijikata said.

"Oh," she smiled lightly. "I'm honored, but—" she looked at her tea. "Why do you want to talk to me?"

He looked at Kira. "You didn't tell her?"

She shook her head. "I—I can't exactly befriend her _just_ so someone can talk to her." In other words, she didn't want it look like she was using Akina.

A new fold of wrinkles appeared in between his eyebrows. _Oops—he's pissed. _

"Please don't be mad at Kira-chan! I'm such a blabbermouth; I never gave her a chance to say anything!" Akina said firmly.

It was quiet in the room for a moment, and the sound of the storm traveled through the room without difficulty. "Well," he cleared his throat. His anger suddenly vanished. "I would like to talk to you about your missing friend."

"Oh, Mi-chan—" she said slowly.

Kira felt a pang of guilt. It was such a touchy subject for Akina. She could tell.

"Yes, do you know the details on that day?"

"Eh? Why would you want to know?"

Another interval of silence washed over everyone, but Okita broke the silence. "Because Kira-chan just so happened to appear on the same day your friend went missing."

Akina's blue eyes widened and she looked at Kira. "Ehh? Really? What a coincidence!"

"So do you have anything that could help us figure out why she's here?" Hijikata pressed.

Kira suddenly felt like a burden. The way he said it made her sulk.

"Well," Akina placed the cup next to her. "Mi-chan and I were out shopping that day. And as we left to go back to our homes, she took an alleyway, and then her parents told me she never came home!" Kira saw her tighten her fists. Her voice was shaking. She felt her heart being squeezed.

Everyone remained silent, to let her continue her story.

"They don't blame me for her disappearance, but I just can't help it!

I could've walked with her! A-and then the same thing happened to Kira-chan!"

All eyes lit up and were now on Kira. She wanted to shrink back. _Why did you have to bring me in this?! Why?! _

"Really Kira-chan?! What happened?" Heisuke exclaimed, only to get hit on the head by Shinpachi.

"Idiot! Let her talk!" He said.

Kira ran her thumb over the edge of the cup. She refused to look at anyone in the eye, but she looked at the doors, letting her vision wander around the room.

"Is that true?" Hijikata asked. She could've sworn she heard some genuine worry in his voice.

"Y-yeah." She nearly choked on her word. "I was walking back from shoppingâ€|and then I got lost." Kira paused. "And then these three weird guys appeared out of nowhere and tried to kidnap me!" She finally exclaimed.

Lightning flashed and the thunder rolled softly.

She could hear the guys murmur amongst themselves. "One said that I was a _target_, and that's when Akina-chan saved me!"

There were no smart remarks from either Heisuke or anyone else. The tension was so palpable.

Akina frantically added, "It was just like when Mi-chan disappeared! Maybeâ€|maybe she got kidnapped by these guys! And I didn't want that to happen again!" She sniffled a bit.

Hijikata looked at the two girls and then glared at Okita, "You idiot! You said she would be in your care! And now she has three men after her!" His voice could've been louder than the thunder if he tried.

Everyone jumped at his outburst.

"So what do you want me to do?" Okita lifted an eyebrow at him. As if unfazed by the insult that was thrown at him.

"Make sure she doesn't get into anymore harm! You're the first Unit Captain! How hard is it to protect _one girl_?!"

Okita remained silent.

Letting out an exasperated sigh, he looked at Saito, "When the storm clears, I want you to take Hayashi-san back to her home."

Saito dipped his head. "I understand, sir."

Eventually, the storm cleared, leaving the strong smell of rain in the air. Kira now sat on a bench, saved from the rain because it was underneath the overhang. She let the humid, sticky air try to melt her freezing bones. Akina was taken back home with Saito, and Okita and Hijikata were having a talk inside. Despite his terrifying

appearance and words, it seemed as if Hijikata cared about her. Okita acted as if it were nothing.

"You don't need to worry," Harada said behind her.

She glanced over her shoulder.

"It's not your fault," he said with a reassuring smile. "Souji usually gets under his skin every now and then."

"So it's always like this?"

"Depends if Kondou-san is around. He idolizes him," he said as he folded his arms and looked out at the clouds.

"Is that so?" Kira murmured.

"Yeah," he nodded. Before he could add anything else, Okita walked out of the room. His usual grin was plastered on his face.

"Go ahead and talk to him if you want," Harada said before walking away down the hall.

Kira watched him go past a corner. Her eyes trailed back to Okita. Their eyes locked for a few seconds, and she was the first to break away. It didn't take long for him to now stand next to her.

"So, what's the damage?" Kira asked without looking at him.

"Well, Hijikata-san says that if you need to leave Headquarters, I need to go with you. Not that I mind, you seem to always get into interesting events." He chuckled.

"Yeah, stuff happens to me all of the timeâ€|" she nodded. "Waitâ€|" It took her a while to wrap around everything he said. "You have to what?!" She exclaimed as she looked back at him.

"You hear me. Consider me as your personal body guard," he winked at her.

"Whatâ€|"

"Don't pretend to be so disappointed," he mused.

She bit her tongue. "I'm not disappointedâ€|" she widened her eyes at what she said. "No! Wait! That didn't come out right!"

He let out a full laugh. It was like a wave of warm wind washing over a snowy field. It rung through the Headquarters, and once again, it lingered in her ears. "Are girls this amusing from where you come from?" He flashed a grin.

_Not all of them. Most of them are pretty bitchy. _She shrugged and then got up. She needed to get her mind off of this, and going outside Headquarters was definitely out of the question. She needed to find an empty room and literally dance away from these thoughts.

"Aww, you're not going to leave _now_ are you, Kira-chan?"

"Yes, as a matter of fact." She said as she started to walk to her room. There was no way she was going to dance in a yukata. She needed her shorts and tank top she missed so much.

"But I still wanna talk to you!" He pouted.

"Maybe later," she said as she slipped past him.

â€|

Kazama sat in his room in his mansion. He looked out at the golden sunset. He couldn't believe he let a female stop him from completing his mission. He swore under his breath. The next time the opportunity would come, he would kill anyone who stood in his way. Before another demon could take the girl.

"Kazama, she is comingâ€" Amagiri's voice beyond the door was cut short when the door slid open.

A short woman, almost mistaken as a young girl, with long, sleek, forest green hair walked in his room. It was tied in a high pony tail, and it reached just below the small of her back. Her curled bangs framed her face nicely. Her footsteps were delicate, placing one foot in front of the other as if testing the ground. Her light green eyes were sharp and her lips curled into a devious smirk. Her skin was flawless and pale. Wearing a golden yukata with an green obi, she stopped walking when she was a few feet away from him.

Kazama slowly turned his head. He didn't look surprised to see a female demon in his presence. He was used to it. Especially this one. She would come in once in a while to chat with him, and damn was she annoying!

"Hello, Kazama," she let out a giggle. "I see you're empty handed again." Her voice was soft but dark.

He made a 'tch' sound and looked at the small demon girl. "Don't state the obvious. Why do you keep on returning here? You're obviously not welcomed," he said through tight lips.

"Aww," she feigned hurt and placed a hand over her heard. Long, sharp nails adorned her fingertips. They itself could be used as a lethal weapon if the female demon wanted to. "You hurt me, Kazama. Really, you do."

"Just say what you want to say before I kick you out of here," a growl came from the bottom of his throat.

"Why don't you say my name for once? I never hear you say it!" She said half-innocently.

"Because your name makes me cringe every time I say it, Maeko."

"Hmpf," she shrugged her petite shoulders and she folded her arms. "Anyways, I just wanted to say that you're in the lead of the hunt for that human girl. Kira, I think. But why didn't you just take her right there?" A dark giggle tainted her words.

"Because humans are annoying," he said.

"Ahh, stop being so vague. You're avoiding my question!" She slinked next to him and walked around him in a circle. She placed a small hand on his broad shoulders and ran it over his arms and chest. "Why didn't you just take her to end it?"

Kazama grabbed her hand rather forcefully. "Don't touch me," he said coldly.

She lifted an eyebrow at him, absolutely unfazed by his reply. Her light green eyes challenged his. "Then answer the question, why didn't you take her?"

He dug his nails in her hand before releasing it. "I wanted it to be silent. Too many witnesses," he said flatly.

A laugh rung through the room, like bells. "Why not cause some chaos for the humans? You always seem amused when they're panicking."

He wanted to get rid of her. Now. He wouldn't dare to tell her that another human girl stopped him. He still didn't understand why he backed off when she told him to. There was something about that girl that made him wonder.

"Ah, did I render you speechless?" She walked around him and ran a hand over his back. "Either way, you might as well take her before all of the demons flock to the poor town."

"If you want her to be caught already, why don't you fetch her yourself?" Venom dripped from his words. As if he would actually let her anyway. "You act as if this is a game," he took a step away from her and pushed her away. Why did she like to get on his nerves?

"Ahh, but I've no interest in her, but more for the chaos that she'll bring." She grinned wickedly. "It is a game, if you think about it." She placed a finger on her chin and tapped it lightly. Saying thoughtfully, "You get the target, and the winner gets a new field of opportunity. Everything one wants. You'd be doing us all a favor if you'd just get her now. You're closest to her in location."

"So again, why do I have to get her? Why don't you do it?" His annoyance was obvious.

"Please," she giggled. "I plan to make my appearance in the game. You'll be surprised," she mused as she casually walked out without saying another word.

When Kazama could no longer detect her in the manor, he growled and cursed, "Damn that bitch! What the hell does she mean?" He tightened his fists, trying to keep his anger down. Maeko was a parasite, and he wanted to kill her so badly. But her death would have to wait.

* * *

><p> Surprise! Akina to the rescue! Honestly, if I had one of the guys to come save her, it would be way too clich   for me!

****And I introduced another character! Keep an eye on this one! She's going to play a huge role later on in the story! But that's all I'm going to say about her, and before you ask, no she is ****_**not**_**** Kazama's lover. If you couldn't tell, he hates her! XD Do you guys know how hard it was to type the last part of the chapter without spoiling anything? Goodness! Starting from here, the story is going to get more in depth and it'll soon explain how Kira was sent there in the first place! Not to mention some future KiraxOkita moments too!****

**** I hope you enjoyed reading this chapter! Your reviews always encourage me, and not to mention it makes it easier, to write more chapters! Thank you! ^u^****

8. Protect and Defense

****Well here you go, my lovelies! Another chapter! I'm starting to think if I should have some sort of update patternâ€|but I'm afraid that if I do that then I might rush myself, or maybe miss the deadline so I'm not really sure. I want to thank you guys again for the reviews!****

****Lily-**** I guess my tips areâ€|wellâ€| huhâ€|(I suck at things like this) Find a topic that you can really relate to, something that's easy to think about. And this is just my opinion, but listening to music always helps me write things, from stories to essays and stuff (sorry, I suck at giving tips :D. I'd PM you, but I can't PM guests ;i w ;i)

****Now, enough of me babbling like an idiot, here's the chapter! Your reviews are greatly appreciated! ^u^****

* * *

><p>For almost five days, Kira had been cooped up in Headquarters, usually helping out when she could. She felt like a prisonerâ€|but she could go outside if Okita would accompany her. It was something she was neutral about, because she would get some new scenery and then Okita was there with his endless collection of teases and smart remarks.

And what was worse was that her iPod finally ran out of battery. She was surprised that it lasted as long as it did, but that was probably due to seldom use. It was useless anyways, since wifi wouldn't be invented for a long while. But she kept it tucked in her jeans pocket, just in case if there came a chance that she could go home. But minus the crazy demon slashing her arm a few weeks ago, and the strange dream, nothing seemed to be magical or out of the ordinary.

She didn't count the days, but it almost seemed like a month, maybe a couple weeks.

Kira walked out of her room on a calm and peaceful morning, it looked like more like the afternoon. She had her hair in a messy braid from last night, but she took it out. She stretched and yawned, blinking her tired eyes.

She was content with the fact that she slept in, and by the looks of

the sun, it was near noon.

The door slid open, the one that had the dining room, and Okita walked out. He looked at her for a moment before grinning and greeting her. "Well, it's about time you woke up, Kira-chan!"

"I usually sleep in," she said softly as she yawned and stretched.

"Huh, is that so?" He lifted an eyebrow. Okita looked like he was thinking about something. His emerald eyes flickered up to the sky and then back at Kira. "I was just gonna go get some dango after lunch. Wanna come with me?"

"Dahâ€|what?" She wasn't here long enough to learn all of the food names, something that she was still frustrated about. She furrowed her brows in confusion, expecting an answer from Okita.

He chuckled. "_Dango_," he said slowly. "You seriously don't know what that is?"

"Hello? I'm not from here," she exclaimed with hand gestures.

"Well, come with me and you'll find out," he mused as he started to walk in the opposite direction, to the gate doors.

Kira made an exasperated sigh. She had nothing else to do. Quickly following after him, she added, "Why can't you just tell me?"

"Because if I do, then you won't follow me. Besides, you've been in Headquarters long enough, a change of scenery is an order."

Much to her reluctance, she couldn't help but agree. Even if she was now being hunted down by three strange men, she needed to get out and explore.

As they passed the threshold of the gates, Kira suddenly asked, "So, any news on the missing girl? Or those guys from a few days ago?"

Okita placed his hands behind his head, not looking at her. His face suddenly lost his carefree smile. "About the missing girl, we haven't found anything. The story that Akina girl gave us didn't really give us a lead, but it correlated somewhat to your story." He paused for a moment. "Those weird guys who tried to kidnap youâ€| same with the missing girl, we didn't get anywhere. No one seems to know who they are."

"Really?" She couldn't help but feel a bit disappointed. The want to go back home started to grow inside of her. Kira tried to quickly shake off the feeling before the conversation would go stale. "So, about thisâ€| _dango_â€| I'm already out here with you! Why can't you just tell me?"

He glanced at her and mused. "You'll find out soon enough."

"Can you tell me if it's good at least?" She lifted an eyebrow at him.

"Can't tell you that either, besides it's up to you if you like it."

"You just made it sound like it's nasty or something!" She exclaimed. She just woke up and preferably wanted something tasteful.

He shrugged and pointed to a vendor. "There, we'll get some there," he said as he walked up to the stand. Kira followed and took in the scent of food, something like chicken or some other meat. Her mouth instantly watered. She was too busy drowning in the smell to pay attention that Okita was holding four small sticks with three dumplings skewered through, but she didn't exactly know that it was dumplings. "Here you go," he grinned as he handed one of them to her.

Kira looked at the food offered to her and hesitantly took it. It kind of reminded her of shish kabobs. "Now can you tell me what it is?"

"Eat it first, it's not like it's poison." He said before he took a bite out of his.

Taking a bite, she chewed. It tasted like chickenâ€¦like a dumpling from a Chinese restaurant.

"It's fried animal intestines in a rice ball," Okita muttered under his breath.

She widened her eyes and nearly coughed up the food that was already half-swallowed. Fried animal intestines?! Ugh! Ew! Ew! Ew!_

Okita started to burst out in laughter, not caring if anyone was watching. "I'm kidding, I'm kidding! It's chicken in a rice ball. Calm down!" He bantered.

Not really sure if he was lying or telling the truth, she quickly swallowed and started to hit his arm. "Not cool! No! That was a dirty trick! Oh my God, I'm never trusting you again!" She ranted

He continued to laugh, he swiped his hand at hers, not exactly trying. "Ahh, okay, okay! Stop it!" He sighed and his laughter finally died down. "Oh, you should've seen your face."

She nearly threw down her dango. "Shut up! You'd freak out too if you'd realize you were eating intestines!"

He shrugged. "You never know," he said as he took another bite. "You gonna eat yours?"

She took a quick bite from hers as an answer. Sure, he tricked her, but she was pretty hungry. It was a complete fifteen seconds of her glaring at him before she averted her gaze. She watched as the people walked through the market.

Okita was already finished with his snack. His voice broke her from her trance. "So," he said nonchalantly. "You should tell me what your hometown is like."

Lifting an eyebrow, she looked at him. "...why?"

Shrugging, he replied coolly, "I'm interested."

Acknowledging the fact that it was better than sitting in awkward silence, she nodded. "Alright. What do you want to know?"

A smirk curled his lips. "Like, what do you do on a daily basis back home?"

"Well..." she thought. "I go to school, like any normal teen. I watch TV and go on the computer. And I dance for...four hours each day." She couldn't believe she nearly forgot her normal life. It was another stab to the heart that she wasn't from here, and she had been gone for so long.

"Ehh, school? Must be really smart, huh?" He winked at her.

Was this a way of flirting? Kira dismissed the thought.

"But...what's 'TV' and 'computer'?" Confusion was written all over his face.

"Ahh, it's hard to explain." She paused. Even if she did explain, he probably wouldn't know about electricity or anything like that. She was tempted to call them 'magical picture boxes'. "It's a box that shows anything really. A computer is like the same thing, only smaller."

He nodded, but it didn't seem he fully understood it. "And you mentioned that you dance, and I saw you a couple of times. Maybe you should give me a lesson or two," he chuckled.

She didn't know why, but her cheeks flared up at the comment. "You wouldn't be able to keep up." She protested.

"True," he suddenly leaned closer. "But maybe you could give me a few tricks or whatever...I could always teach you how to use a sword in return," he mused.

His offer was very tempting. After all, she have to know how to protect herself, especially when three strange men were after her. After a few more bites, she too was done with her snack. "Well," she thought for a moment. "Why do you want to learn how to dance?" She couldn't imagine him doing jazz hands or anything like that.

"Ehh, I was just kidding Kira-chan." Okita leaned back and a devious smile spread across his face. "You _want _to teach me? Or is it because so you want to spend some time with me?"

Kira smacked his arm lightly. "Quit it with the teasing! I'm never going to take you seriously ever again!" She huffed. "I'm already stuck with you."

He feigned hurt by putting a hand over his heart. "Oh, that hurt, right there. Why are you so mean, Kira-chan?"

"Ugh whatever," she said as she quickly stood up and started to walk in no specific direction.

Okita was beside her in a matter of seconds. "Now don't run off on

me, you could get in trouble." He said as if he were scolding a child.

"Yes, _mom_." Kira replied. He was tap dancing on her last few nerves. Dancing. Sighing, she folded her arms and gave Okita a look. "So you want to learn how to dance?"

"Is that a challenge?"

"Maybe. If you'd really teach me how to fight with a sword," she said slowly. "Then I'd guess we'd have a deal." Muttered Kira.

Lifting a brick red eyebrow, Okita folded his arms. "I think we can arrange that. But I'm not Heisuke-kun, so it'll be harder to beat me."

She shrugged. "Whatever you say."

"You're not taking me seriously," said Okita. "Are you?"

"I _did_ say I wasn't going to, so yeah." He reminded her so much of her friends for some reason. Was it because he'd tease her to no end like Casy and Bryn? Without being able to scan the words, she said out loud, "You're like them."

"Hmm?"

She widened her eyes and an exasperated sigh escaped her lips. "Agh, I didn't mean to say that! It slipped," she muttered the latter.

"I was going to ignore it, but now since you're making such a fuss about it...who's _them_?"

The dancer realized that there was no way out of this one... "Just...my friends," a bitter smile curled her lips. She really missed them.

He nodded in understanding. "And so how am I like them?"

Shrugging her shoulders, she replied honestly, "Not really sure. Maybe...nah, never mind." Her eyes flickered to a few of the vendors. She scanned over the assorted items being sold, and customers, examining and exchanging money. Then she stopped and locked eyes with those blood, red eyes. _What's he doing here?!_

Okita nudged her. "Oi, Kira-chan, what's wrong?" He followed her gaze and eventually saw the man she was staring at. "Is that him?" He asked huskily. He immediately stiffened.

All she could do was nod. What was even worse was that he was staring right back at her, as if trying to break her from the inside out. She unconsciously moved closer to Okita.

He swore under his breath. "C'mon, Kira-chan," he said as he tugged on her arm. "We need to tell Hijikata-san about this." Looking down at her, he managed to pull Kira away from Kazama's piercing gaze.

An angry red was replaced by a calm, emerald green. She nodded at him and let him lead her through the town. She didn't dare to turn around. There was something about him that she didn't like, and not

just because he wanted to kidnap her.

...

In Headquarters, the three, Kira, Okita and Hijikata were in that same room from yesterday. Everyone else was either patrolling or doing something of the sort.

"Dammit," the Vice-Commander muttered. "Damn it all. Out of all people, why him?"

Kira sat there as Okita explained the situation to an angered Hijikata. "If we would've known earlier that it was Kazama," Okita sighed. "At least we know who's after her."

"Souji," he sounded strict, yet concerned. "This bastard is a demon. This makes the situation even worse. Who knows what he wants from Kira. He brought her here in the first place." He folded his arms and looked down at the ground.

Kira finally spoke up. "We don't know if he's behind all this...and besides, if he was behind all of this, why does he want to take me back? He would've just." She hesitated at the next word. "...kidnapped me without any of this happening. And," she looked at both men. "How do you know this guy?"

"We encountered him and his little gang a while back," replied Okita. "He put up one hell of a fight." He said through clenched teeth.

"And when you say 'demon' that's just a figure of speech right?" She asked slowly.

The two men were silent for a moment. It made her wish she didn't ask that. "No. He's a real demon, straight from hell," Hijikata muttered the last part.

Blinking her eyes, she gave him an incredulous look. "Really...? As in, the horns and pointy ears? Demons don't really exist right?"

"Not sure about where you came from, but here they exist. It's rare though," he replied. Looking at Okita he said, "I'll alert Kondou-san and the others. Don't take your eyes off Kira."

"Alright, alright," Okita said. "But does that mean I have to drag her with me during my patrols?" He winked at her, but she rolled her eyes in response.

Hijikata was silent for a moment, as if actually thinking about it. He sighed, either out of frustration or defeat. "Although I prefer for her to stay in Headquarters, since we know that bastard is the one who's after her, you said you'd watch herâ€|"

"She did beat Heisuke-kun at sparring." He pointed out, musing.

"If she can protect herselfâ€|" he slowly said.

Putting up a serious look, Okita assured. "Don't worry, Hijikata-san.

I'll take care of it."

_So...Okita is really going to teach me how to fight with a sword?

—

* * *

><p>Short chapter is short. Consider it a filler...with a few hints of future events. Can you figure them out? Ugh, I hate fillers, but honestly, I can't have one intense event happen after another! You gotta space it out! QuQ

.:PLEASE READ THIS:.

**This week is the starting of finals. I might work on a few bits of the chapter, but I definitely won't finish the next chapter by the end of the week. Starting next week, til the 5th of July, I'll be going on vacation. Do you know what that means? It means, no chapters or anything during that time. NOTHING. I'm 1020% sure about this. Who knows, I might get inspired to write something off of my experience! I just wanted to be nice and give you guys another chapter before I temporarily leave. I hope you guys have an awesome summer! **

**Thanks for reading another chapter of Dance of Swords, and I just want to say 'thank you' to all of these reviews. They make me smile so much! You all are wonderful! Please review~ **

**~Jen **

9. Pure Fear

I am back~ Well, I've been back since the 5**th****, but I've been resting and such. Anyways, I'm back, and recharged! I bring you another chapter! Inspiration struck when I was gone, and I was dying for a computer to type it on. I never manage to write things down because I lose them in the end. **

** I'm really happy that I managed to finish this so quickly, and the length of it is actually decent, in my opinion anyways. :D**

** Haha, anyways, hope you enjoy the chapter~! I don't own Hakuoki or any of its characters, except for Kira.**

* * *

><p>Kira sat on one of the benches, now changed back into her 'normal' clothes. After the little meeting with Hijikata, Okita told her to wait outside, and she did. From what she remembered, Hijikata was going to tell the commander about their discovered enemy, and it was fairly quiet. She could help but think that either it was her, or the temperature got higher. Not to mention it was so humid.

_God, how can people wear all of those layers?! _She let out a frustrated sigh and craned her neck up to see the clouds roll on by. For a moment, it felt like she was back home, sprawled out on the cushioned swing, listening to music. Her little daydream was interrupted when something bopped her head.

"Hey!" Kira looked over her shoulder and saw Okita, once again. Her eyes flickered to the two sheathed swords in his hand. "Soâ€¦ you were serious?" She asked sheepishly.

"You thought I was lying?" He lifted an eyebrow at her.

"Wellâ€¦" her voice trailed off. "Ah, you know what, never mind." She eyed the swords more carefully. "We're using real swords?"

"So many questions," he sighed. "Why do you ask, are you nervous?" His trademark smirk curled his lips.

"Kindaâ€¦?" Kira stood and was handed one of the swords. "Waving around a huge chunk of metal isn't exactly safeâ€¦"

"That's why I'm gonna teach you," he winked at her. "Since we know who's after you, we should just skip to the real swords. It's no different than a wooden one." He said as he unsheathed his sword. The metal glinted in the sun. "Except for the part that you can slice anything in two."

"Thanks, that really makes me feel betterâ€¦" she said dryly. She copied his movements and unsheathed the sword. It looked so much slender than the big, bulky swords she would see in movies. "Are you sure this is a good idea though? I could hurt someone, and that someone could be meâ€¦" She was graceful when she danced, but carrying a sword was a different story.

Okita chuckled and walked onto the grass. He beckoned for her. "Relax, you won't have to worry about that. I'll make sure you won't get hurt." He said in a tone Kira couldn't tell if he was joking or not. "Now, hold the katana like this," he said as he held out his in front of him.

Kira copied his moves, holding the katana in front of her. She felt bit awkward.

He put down his sword and walked behind Kira. He placed his hands on hers. "Your hands need to be like this, otherwise it'll be easily knocked out of your grasp." He said as he repositioned her hands. Kira couldn't help but think of his chest against her back. When she finally caught her thoughts, she mentally slapped herself.

_Why am I thinking about this?! God, calm down, Kira!

—

"Understand?" Okita's voice broke her train of thought.

She managed to nod, and also managed to feel her heart thrum against her chest. When he left her, she immediately lost the warmth on her back, but could still feel his fingers on her hands.

He stood in front of her, sword pointed towards her. "When someone tries to attack you, block." He raised his sword, high above their heads. He brought it down, quicker than she thought, and immediately lifted her arms and blocked the somewhat slow attack. The metals clicked together. "See, it's not _that_ bad," he mused. Okita took the katana away and lunged straight at her.

She widened her eyes and completely forgot about blocking. She took a step to the side and dodged it. She could hear it cut through the air. "Hey!" Kira tightened her grip on the sword and took swing to his side, only to be blocked at lightning speed.

Their clashed swords made a ringing sound that echoed all around them. Kira was putting all of her strength in keeping her katana from sliding. She could feel his strength, and it looked like he wasn't even trying.

They locked eyes with each other. "Now you're getting the hang of it. Though your form is horrible," he chuckled.

She scowled at him. "Well, can you blame me? I'm at a disadvantage here!"

"What? Am I too tough for you?" He mused.

Knowing that whatever she would say would only be twisted by him, she just rolled her eyes at him. She put all her weight to one side and the swords scraped against each other. She turned and attempted another slash at the side, but in an instant, their swords clashed again, only resulting in the katana being knocked out of her hands. Its blade stuck in the ground a few feet away. Her hands trembled, having the katana being so easily knocked out of her grasp, even when she was holding so tightly. It felt like her hands were going to fall off.

Okita grabbed her by the shoulders, and pulled her close to him. Her back against his chest once again, but this time, the blade was dangerously close to her neck. "And this is how you'll get killed easily. You just keep on swinging, with no goal in particular. You need to think before you do anything else," he said.

"Sure, plan your every attack in the heat of the moment. That's successful," she muttered sarcastically. "You wanna let go of me?" She asked as she glanced at the glinting metal, just inches away from her skin.

He moved the blade away and released her. Kira made sure there was a good enough gap between them.

"Well, you were against a Unit Captain. Of course I would beat you easily," he said with a smug look on his face, resulting in Kira rolling her eyes again. "Against any average man, you'd at least manage to defend yourself." He walked over to the discarded katana and plucked it off the ground. He looked at the blade and then back at her. "Though, you don't look like you would fight, even if you were provoked."

She wasn't exactly fond of him examining her, what she would and wouldn't do. "Well, where I come from, we don't walk around with swords and kill people!" She couldn't say that they were more civilized. They had guns, and there was always something on the news about gunshots and stuff. Kira shook her head and sighed. "No, I wouldn't." She finally said. She never imagined herself protecting herself from other weirdos, let alone kill if she had to.

"Hmpf, looks like I have to protect you all the time then," he smirked.

Briskly walking up to him, she grabbed the katana she used away from his grasp. "I'm not helpless you know!" She looked at the katana and muttered, "But carrying a sword around isn't a bad ideaâ€¦ I guess it could intimidate people."

"Well," he chuckled. "One thing's for sure, you won't be intimidating me."

"I wasn't directing the comment at you, stupid! You're so self-absorbed!" She huffed as she found the scabbard and sheathed the weapon.

He feigned hurt. "Kira-chan is so mean! Calling me stupid!"

"Is that all you can say about me, saying that I'm mean? Be more creative," she scoffed as she walked away, in no particular direction.

"Hmpf," was all that Kira heard before he called out, "hey, I taught you how to fightâ€¦"

"Barely," she cut him off.

He quickly walked up to her and sheathed his sword. "The basics," he stuck out his tongue at her. "So you should teach me â€"the basics-of dancing! We had a deal."

Kira stopped at mid-stride. "You're seriousâ€¦? You're that curious?"

He shrugged. "A deal is a deal," he said simply. A playful grin curled his lips. "I'm at your mercy." He said in a sing-song tone.

â€¦

They were in that same room where Kira would practice dancing. Empty and quiet. She couldn't believe she was doing this. Teaching Okita how to dance. By some miracle, her iPod still had some juice, but it would probably last for a few minutes. Before she selected a song, she looked at Okita, trying to imagine him performing a pirouette.

He folded his arms. "See something you like Kira-chan?" He smirked and lifted an eyebrow at her.

"Ah, shut upâ€¦" she slapped herself mentally for making it sound like she was checking him out. She walked up to him to get a closer look. "Well, ballet is _definitely _out of the question." She laughed lightly, trying to imagine him do ridiculous jumps and spins. "Ahhâ€¦ jazz wouldn't be good either. And tap is a big 'no'." She thought for a moment. "The only thing that you could possibly keep up withâ€¦ is traditional dancing in my opinion." In the past, she took traditional along with her three majors, but dropped it since it was so boring.

"Traditional dancing eh? With a fan and everything?" Okita had a quizzical look on his face.

"What?" She matched his confused look. "Traditional dancingâ€¦ like uh." She moved her hands a bit, as if to help her. "European traditional dancing? Um, this is really hard to explain. Waltzing?"

"If you're gonna teach me, what good is it if my instructor doesn't even know how to explain it?"

That comment just stabbed her. Her cheeks flared. "Well if you don't want me to teach you then that's fine with me!"

"Relax," he laughed lightly. "I'm only kidding. You look cute when you get flustered."

She made an exasperated sigh. "Wellâ€¦ I guess I'm better at explaining with actions." She muttered under her breath. "So, you put your hand," she grasped his hand and placed it on her waist and put her left hand on his shoulder, "here. And the other," she took his other hand in hers. "Like this."

"Such an intimate dance. I see where this is going," he smirked.

"Stop teasing for a moment!" She did her utmost best at keeping her blush down. Sure, she danced with many guys, but she couldn't help but think that this one was different in some way. "Usually, the guy would lead. So you take a step forward with your left foot."

He did so, and she moved her foot back.

After a few minutes of instructing and nearly getting her feet stepped on multiple times, she took out her iPod and quickly selected one of the songs she kept for traditional dancing. The song echoed through the room. She set it on the floor and looked up at Okita.

Then went along with the beat. "Huh, you're doing pretty goodâ€¦" she admitted.

"Well what can I say?" He grinned. Kira was waiting for another arrogant comment. "You're a good teacher." He said, without any hint of teasing or anything of the sort. Something she found foreign, and she nearly lost track of what step was next.

"Oh, uh. Thanks." Kira stumbled a bit, but Okita was quick to catch her.

"Are you sure you're a dancer? Aren't they supposed to be graceful?" His joking demeanor was back again. Almost immediately, he got them back to the dance.

"I was just thinking about something," she said quickly. "And no, before you ask, I wasn't thinking about you." That was the biggest lie yet.

"Relax, I wasn't going to anyways," he chuckled.

"Of course you weren't," she squinted his eyes at him and with that, her iPod died. Probably with no chance of reviving until she got her chargerâ€¦and an electrical output. The two stopped dancing and

slowly pulled away from each other.

"Well, that was a new experience," Okita said. "Maybe we should do it again, even if there isn't any music."

She was silent for a moment. Kira picked up her dead iPod. "You might be caught by one of the guysâ€¦ doing such a _strange _dance. They might tease you for it." A small smile curled the corners of her mouth.

"Or they might be interested and you could teach every guy in Headquarters how toâ€¦ uh, 'waltz' is it? Ahh, but then again, I want to be special and be the only one who knows how."

"Ugh, I think I regret teaching you," she said as she quickly walked past him without giving him a second look. But it took all that she had to keep walking and not look, strangely.

â€¦

Later that night, Kira came from the bath. She felt refreshed, and tired. As she closed the door to her room, she heard something in the darkened corner. The one spot the light of the moon didn't touch.

She remained silent and just looked at the shadowed corner. Five, agonizing seconds ticked away before an unfamiliar voice. "Hmm, what a shame. Kazama didn't steal you away from this dump," a female voice sighed. She took a step so that black didn't shroud her face. The abnormally deep green hair and the piercing eyes were all that Kira noticed. It felt like her eyes kept her in a trance, because she wasn't bolting out of the room like she hoped. Eyes that reminded her of Kazama's.

It was Maeko, a demon Kira was unfamiliar with. A smile curled her lips. "But maybe that's his plan."

"Now who the hell are _you_?" Kira had no idea where her sudden confidence sprung from, but as quick as it came, it left.

Her smile turned into a menacing glare. "Watch your tongue, human. I could slit your throat and be done with it if I really wanted to. Or I could slowly choke you to death." She walked up to her so that she was three feet away. Maeko examined her. "It seems like you know nothing yet, and what you know now is misleading." An amused giggle emitted from her. It sounded sweet and sinister, making her cringe.

"Do you knowâ€¦ why I'm here?" She asked in a shaky voice.

"Yes, I do." Said Maeko.

"Couldâ€¦ could you tell me? Do you know how I can go back?" All of her held back questions came flooding out of her. She wanted to know all the answers. Or at least the answers that she wanted to hear.

In less than a second, Maeko's clawed hand grabbed her neck. She squeezed tightly, making Kira's head dizzy and throbbing. Slamming her against the wall, Maeko hissed with clenched teeth. "Didn't I tell you to watch your tongue? You humans are all annoying, it's a

surprise Kazama didn't kill you. He has a higher tolerance than me."

Kira felt her throat constrict and she was gasping for air that her lungs cried out for. She tried to pry her fingers away, but to no avail. A little squeak came out of her mouth, but nothing else. Her heart thrummed against her chest as she thought about the situation she was in. She could be killed, right here, and no one would know.

"Consider this a warning. Play the game right, or I'll have to kill you early. Demons can't wait forever," and with that, with the strength of a gorilla, she flung Kira across the room.

She didn't have time to yell for help, as she was still struggling to gasp for air. She was still assessing how she threw her like she weighed nothing. But her body reached the wall before she could think anymore. A scream of pain came out and she fell. Her body was sprawled on the floor. From her back to her head, she hurt. Mainly her head was the one in most pain.

Tears blurred her vision and poured down. Through her vision, the feet of the demon were there... and the next, no more. That's when her door slid open and a few men rushed to her. Her ears cringed at all of the noise and her head was throbbing.

She could make out the voices, Hijikata, Heisuke and Okita. The others were scanning her room. Heisuke helped her sit up. "Kira-chan! Are you okay?! What happened?" He asked in a panicked stricken voice.

"Was someone in your room?" Asked Hijikata. "We heard you scream and a loud noise."

Fear and relief washed over her. Never once did she feel like this. After all this time she was here, she broke down. Letting out all the tears she held back. From missing her family, the fear of never returning home, and now this. She didn't waste a second and wrapped her arms around the nearest body. "I-I could've died! She could've killed me! She-she...!" A flash of those eyes, her's and Kazama's, created another wave of tears. It was fear. Pure, raw fear.

Hijikata was silent before telling the others in her room, "We have an intruder! Search the area!"

"Sir," Saito nodded and the others left the room.

A voice in her left ear was soft. "Relax, whoever she was is gone. You'll be alright." What really shocked Kira in her little breakdown was that she was clinging to Okita.

* * *

><p>Andâ€|we'll leave it at that! I'm pretty happy that I finished this chapter so fast, which probably would be ages for you guys! Anyways, a lot of stuff happened, mainly fluff because I was in the mood and it's been a while since I updated. Besides, gotta make their relationship grow anyways!

** It was a bit more than a filler, due to Maeko's sudden appearance,

and that's only going trigger more events. ****Huh, and this is the first time we see Kira actually vulnerable...awww I feel kinda bad.
**

**Please don't forget to REVIEW! Thanks~ Ahh, I'm getting excited for the future chapters! **

~Jen

10. One at a Time

We're in the double digits! Chapter 10! God, this took foreverâ€”

Wow, it's been a while! Procrastination, writer's block and school got in the way. I was planning to updateâ€” for a while now, but this chapter was like 'Nuh-uh Jen, not today!' you know from that commercial when that guy smacked that kid's box of cerealâ€”Anyways, I'm really sorry for the loooooong wait! ;; Hope I can get a review from you! They help me out a lot! Hakuoki and it's characters, minus Kira, are not mine.

* * *

><p>Kira woke up the next day rather calmly, despite the events that occurred last night. She was silent and remained lying down, staring at the ceiling above her. Her mind relayed the horrifying event, the clawed hand that grabbed her and the petite demon-child with super strength. She remembered the pain that raced through her body, and she could feel it lingering still. And then there was that time when she broke down and cried her eyes out, and Okita was the one who comforted her. Everything else was a blur; she couldn't even remember when she fell asleep.<p>

Lost in her thoughts, she didn't hear the sound of knocking at her door before it slid open. It was his voice that broke her out of her daze. "Morning," Okita said. No smart remarks or even a slight sing-song tone to his voice.

"Morning." She replied.

Her attention was brought to the tray he held in his hands. She spotted a bowl and a cup. "Oh, you didn't have to do that," she said and sat up a bit too quickly. She was right about one thing, she was still in pain. A sharp sting ran up and down her back, and her head throbbed. Kira cringed.

"Relax, I have to. I did say that I'd look after you. Besides, Hijikata-san would throw a fit if I didn't do anything about it." He said as he took a seat beside her and set the tray next to him.

All she could do was nod. She looked at the bowl, filled with soup still steaming. Silence lingered in the air.

"We couldn't find that girl you kept on mentioning about," he said, annoyance tinted his voice. "You certainly caused a ruckus over the night." He chuckled, but Kira didn't find that funny. She lifted a brow at him and he quickly amended himself. "Don't worry, we'll find her."

"What about Kazama? And that missing girl?" She finally asked.

"Nothing, that damn demon definitely knows how to hide when we're looking for him." He paused. "You know, you're taking this pretty well." An amused grin tugged at the corners of his mouth. He propped up his head with an arm on his knee. "You're pretty tough."

Kira shrugged. "I guess..." she thought for a moment. He had a point there. "I'm just in too big of a shock right now to panic. But is that what you guys always feel like? When you're out on patrols." She added quickly.

"Nah, the idiots we fight are basically rookies with swords."

"Like me?"

"Would you be upset if I said yes?" She could sense his usual self poking through those words.

She gave him a look and smiled tightly. "Not really. If they fight as bad as me, then I guess you have nothing to worry about. But I can protect myself!"

"I didn't say you couldn't!"

Her moments of terror from last night seemed to have faded away, as if it were a horrible nightmare. Not real. Her sore body made her think about stretching her muscles a bit too much instead of being thrown to a wall. Was it okay to say that she felt better when she was talking to him? _Of course!_ She thought. He was starting to grow on her, even though his personality sometimes drove her nuts.

"You should eat before your soup gets cold. Hijikata-san also made you some medicine." He said, pointing to a small cup near the bowl.

Her eyes flickered to both bowls. "I guess I should."

"Or maybe I should feed you," he chuckled.

"No!" She said quickly. "I mean... no. I'm not a kid." Her hands picked up the bowl and the spoon and she took a tentative sip. The hot liquid poured down her throat, and it burned. "Ohh... still hot." She grimaced. She could still feel the burning liquid sit in her stomach before fading. She was sure that her tongue was burned.

"I'm glad you haven't gone into a panicked state after last night. It would be boring with you being all quiet and timid."

She scoffed.

"Seriously! It wouldn't be fun to tease you if you were too serious," he grinned. "Oh, how do you feel? You said you were thrown across the room..."

She didn't remember telling him that, but when she was delirious, it must've slipped. "I'm just sore. It's not like I've broken a bone." She never knew how that felt like though, since she didn't want to

spoil dance season because she would do something stupid. Taking another sip, blowing it this time, she set the bowl down on the tray, her hands couldn't deal with the hot bowl.

"You think you would be able to go on patrol with me tonight? Not sure if Hijikata-san would mind if you stayed, since you're injured. But he might throw a fit if you leave," he grinned.

"I'll let you know." She wasn't fond of going back out there, knowing that crazed people were after her. Who knows if there were more! But since hiding out in Headquarters wouldn't work, due to last night, she was indecisive.

"Well," Okita started to get up. "If you need me, scream." He grinned before quietly leaving the room, resulting in Kira being alone again. She looked at the closed door and then at the bowl of soup. Might as well finish it. Picking it up, she started to scoop up the broth with the spoon.

â€|

Kazama appeared in the manor of the demon girl he hated so much. He was more pissed off than usual, and he had a reason for it. He had to hide a growl that was threatening to escape from his lips.

The green-haired demon rounded a corner and ended up in the same room as he. She blinked, and a grin tugged at her lips, followed by a soft giggle. "Well, this is surprising. Why are you here, Chikage-san?"

"How dare you use such formality," he let out an exasperated sigh. She was distracting him from his real reason why he was here. "Last night, you went to the dogs' headquarters." It wasn't a question, more of a statement.

Folding her arms, she walked up to him, taking light steps as usual. "Yes, I did." Her smile was replaced with a glare, anger was visible in her eyes. "And you still didn't capture her! Are you that weak? Are you afraid of those humans?" Her voice rose with every second. "I don't like waiting for things, so I paid that pathetic human girl a visit!" She took a calming breath. Her voice softened, but irritation tinted her voice. "She still doesn't know a thing, and it'll be a matter of time before she figures everything out! My plans will be ruined!"

"Why does it matter? And I refuse to be intimidated by you. I'll get her from those mongrels when I feel like it," he said as he squinted his blood red eyes at her. "Why create so much trouble? You could've been done with it the second she arrived."

Her anger suddenly vanished, an amused grin grew on her lips. "I thought the answer would be simple. I love to see those pathetic humans in pain. What else are demons supposed to do than to meddle with them? It makes time go by fast."

He was quiet for a moment.

"What is it, Kazama?" She feigned innocence and tilted her head to the side, like a child. She basically looked like one too.

"What are these plans? It just seems like this is going nowhere."

"Do you really think that I'll tell you now?"

Annoyance was growing inside him. Without a word, he turned and headed to the doors, slamming them shut behind him.

â€|

Waking from her third nap, Kira sat up slowly, letting out a yawn. The medicine she took earlierâ€| was actually effective after a few minutes of taking it, other than the numerous pain meds she took sometimes back home. Her head didn't hurt, and the pain in her back dimmed tremendously. Her conversation with Okita flashed in her mind.

Maybe I should consider his offerâ€|

She pushed the blanket off and got to her feet. Walking to the door, she slid it open, surprised to see Okita about to knock. She looked at the tray that he held. "Oh, seriously, you don't have toâ€|"

"You're awake and walkingâ€| guess you feel better now?"

Kira sidestepped to let him inside. Okita set the tray down next to her futon, containing a couple rice balls and tea. "Yeah, I am, actually."

He looked at her. "So, did you make a decision?"

She nodded. "I'll go with you."

"Can't stay away from me, can you?" Okita smiled.

Kira scowled at him. "You're so full of yourself."

He ignored her comment. "Get ready, we'll be leaving soon."

How long was she asleep this time? Her eyes shifted to the sky outside her room, trying to find the position of the sun. She could already see the pastel pinks and oranges in the west.

â€|

By the time Kira hurried out of her room, her recently acquired sword at her side, they were about to leave. Rushing up to Okita, who wore his blue haori and forehead protector, she said, "Ah, sorry I took so long."

"We were going to leave without you," he half-joked.

The small group moved past the gates and out onto the streets of Kyoto. The light given off by the lanterns touched the walls of buildings and created shadows that stretched in their movements. Their footsteps echoed in the quiet town.

Kira looked up at Okita. "So, Hijikata-san was okay with me leaving?"

He shrugged. "He didn't look very happy about it, but he said yes anyways."

She nodded and scanned the area, wondering if this was really a good idea. She created a mental list, weighing out the pros and cons about each choice. If she went, Kazama or that other lady could find her, and if she stayedâ€| the same thing would probably happen, considering that that lady managed to sneak into Kira's room.

Her train of thought was cut short when she heard a man screaming in the distance. They froze for a moment. "This way!" Okita said to his men before the group rushed in the direction of the scream.

Coming up to a corner, Kira heard maniacal laughter, as they turned left. She couldn't forget that laugh. The first day she got hereâ€"

She stopped running, and the men rushed past her. Okita stopped a few feet ahead of her and glanced over his shoulder. "What are you doing, Kira-chan?"

"This isn't right," she muttered.

"Of course it's not right, it's left!"

She mentally face palmed. "No! That's not what I meant! Did you not hear that laugh?!"

"Sir!" One of the men came up to Okita. "You need to look at this!"

Okita and Kira looked at each other before breaking into a run, Kira gripped her sword tightly, unsure if she would actually use it. When they rushed up to the sight, Kira glanced at the scene for only a moment.

A man was sprawled out in a pool, probably of his own, blood. His arm was severed, and his sleeve was coated in a rich, crimson red. And his headâ€| was missing.

Even though she saw it for a split second, she could feel her stomach churn, and was grateful she didn't eat her food earlier. The smell of blood was so potent, and it made her scrunch up her nose.

"What the hellâ€|" Okita muttered as he crouched down to further inspect the bloodied body. Moment later, he stood straight, his face was hardened. "Dammit," Kira heard him say.

She felt something stare at her and goose bumps crawled up her arms. "Okita," she started off, only to be cut off with a few men limping out of the shadows. Blood stained the corners of their mouths, the same color of the eyes. One of them licked the dried blood from their hand and grinned maliciously.

Rasetsu.

"How did they get out?" A member muttered.

Okita shook his head. "I don't know, but we need to get rid of them

before they kill another. Make sure you save some for me though," his joke clashed with his serious face. He unsheathed his sword in a quick motion, and the sound of metal being pulled out was mashed together into one sound. He looked at Kira, "You better use that sword, or I'll kill you."

She furrowed her brows, frustrated. "Why are you joking _now_?"

Three more red-eyed demons appeared, all around them. Emerging from alleyways, some from rooftops. They all held up their bloodied swords and lunged at them, emitting screams and insane laughter, drunk from the smell and taste of blood.

Swords gave off a metallic rasp, men yelling as they slashed at the demons. Kira gripped the handle, ready to defend herself—or at least try. She was in the middle of a bloody fight, all around there were swords clashing and blood staining the ground. The smell and the sounds were overwhelming. One Rasetsu locked eyes with her, and her heart dropped into her stomach.

_Uh-oh—| _

The demon darted away from its current opponent and charged at Kira. She gasped and yanked out her sword. Taking a step back, she held onto the sword for dear life, squinting her eyes, not wanting to see it so up close.

"Kira!" She could hear Okita's voice, but her focus was put onto her attacker. Their swords clashed, and she was nearly thrown back from the strength the blow had. Her hands were tingling, and the urge to drop her sword was immense. Arms shaking, she looked at the demon, pupils dilated, red eyes staring straight at her. She could smell the odor coming from its mouth, making her gag.

Her heart thrummed against her chest, making it feel like it was going to explode. In her mind, she screamed at the top of her lungs. This wasn't like a video game. It was real, and she had the chance of getting hurt, or even killed.

He laughed at her, giving her a toothy grin, pressing his weight towards her. She took another step back, resulting in her stepping into the still warm blood.

She shuddered. "Ew, ew, oh my God—" she whimpered. Her arms gave in, and they broke contact, making her stumble a bit. The demon lurched towards her, the tip of his stained sword aimed straight at her. She took a step to the side, hearing the _woosh_ of the blade next to her ear.

With her sword down at her side, she continued to dodge the attacks with ease, thanks to dancing. It brought its sword above his head, slashing down. Her arms shot up, deflecting the blade with hers. A familiar tingling sensation ran up and down her arms, making it feel like they would shatter.

Taking its sword back, aiming towards her stomach, it lunged for her. She brought her sword down right before it could pierce her, but it resulted in the sword being knocked out of her hands, lying ten feet away from her. Her hands ached, absorbing all of those powerful

blows.

Kira paled, suddenly wishing that someone would come up and kill it. She was too stiff to move, lacking in her only protection which was now feet away.

It must've gotten a feeling that it was going to claim another life, because a large grin curled its lips and it swiped its sword at her.

She screamed, screwing her eyes shut waiting for the blade to finish the job.

But it never came.

Opening one eye, she found a blade, a different one, pierced through the demon's chest. Its eyes widened, mouth agape. It dropped its sword, clattering on the ground. Seconds later, it crumpled to the ground. Her savior pulled out the sword. Her eyes followed the sword and then the hand. She was about to thank the person, but she held her tongue.

Which was worse? Being confronted by a crazed Rasestu, or someone who had been chasing you since day one? She was torn between the two, after meeting his red eyes, not like those of the Rasestu.

"You," she said, trying not to let her fear get in the way of her speech.

"I assume that she wants you alive." Kazama said.

Okita's stained sword was pointed at Kazama in two seconds flat. "Bastard, why can you just leave her alone?" He growled.

_Was he finished killing the otherâ€|? _Her eyes flickered to the bodies, now sprawled out on the ground. Blood everywhere. She averted her gaze, looking at the back of Okita's head. The only part of him that wasn't covered in blood. She let out a sigh mentally, wanting to let out tears of relief.

Kazama didn't even flinch at the sword. "I wasn't addressing you, dog." Venom dripped from his words despite his calm expression. He looked over Okita and at Kira. "Why do you let them protect you, human? Don't you want to go home?" The rest of the men gathered around them, waiting to attack.

The last sentence struck a chord with her. She didn't think much about home, since she was gone for a while. If she didn't know any better, it seemed that she forgotten about home entirely.

"Don't listen to him, Kira." Okita remained firm, ready to defend. "She obviously doesn't want to go with you." He said to him.

"Why don't you let _her_ talk?" He made no move to remove Okita from in front of him, however.

Being put on the spot right after a battle didn't settle well with her. "Did you do this? T-this attack?" She bit her tongue for slipping.

He lifted a brow, probably not happy that she avoided his question. "No. But it was a good distraction for these dogs."

"Tch, you lost. You're not going to get her." Okita said.

"She's going to be mad." He said, ignoring Okita. "It would be best to come with me than her."

"Who's 'her'?"

"You've seen her beforeâ€¦ that female demon." he said before turning. Kira picked up her head. That girl with green hair with inhuman strength. It clicked. How else did she acquire such strength?! She was getting curious, wanting to know more.

Swords were still pointed at him, but he paid no mind to them. As soon as he disappeared, the men eased and put their blades down. Kira was now clinging onto a single thread that could lead to why she was brought here.

Okita let out a frustrated sigh, whipping his blade to the side and the blood splattered the ground. He sheathed his sword and picked up Kira's discarded sword and handed it to her. "Are you okay?" He looked at her foot, the one that stepped in the blood, and gave her a look.

She nodded numbly and sheathed the sword. Noting his eyes, she added, "I-I just stepped in some blood." That was the most disgusting thing she had said in her life.

"Guess I shouldn't take you out on patrols, huh?" He grinned at her and turned to his men. "We need to get rid of these bodies."

They nodded and started to drag them away.

Kira looked up at him; his face was dusted lightly with specks of blood. "I d-didn't say that! I'll still go on patrols! And I've figured something out." Her heartbeat was going back down as she continued to talk to him.

Okita gave her a look, signaling for her to continue.

"That girlâ€¦ from last night. She's a demonâ€¦ and she knows Kazama." She said.

He was silent for a moment. "Damn, is every demon in on this?"

* * *

><p>Ahhhh, I like this chapter length, even though it was a pain in the neck in the middle of the chapter. Thank you for the reviews (even though I was taking forever to update orz) I can't say when I'll update again though ^^" I hope it'll be soon though!

11. Turning Page

It's been a while~ school started out rough, and it's only gonna get worse since I'm moving to Texas Dec. 20**th****, so I haven't

been in a writing mood. Depression and writing don't mix very well. Anyways, hope you enjoy the chapter. You could say 'Turning Page' by Sleeping at Last was the inspiration...maybe.**

I don't own Hakuoki or any of the characters except for Kira!

* * *

><p>The room was quiet and dimly lit, and the sound of light footsteps and paper rustling could be heard. It smelled of aged paper, and something else, something Kira couldn't put her finger on.<p>

"Oi, do you even know where you're looking?" Okita's voice sounded next to Kira, an amused chuckle rung through his voice.

She prevented herself from rolling her eyes and tried to keep herself composed. "No." She said bluntly.

Ever since that attack, Kira sparked a curiosity about these demons. Not only would it allow her to be out of Headquarters, even for an hour, she could possibly find something as to why she was brought here. She remembered in class that the Greek gods and goddesses had powers, so why not Japanese demons?

So she was accompanied to a small building with archives of all sorts, a library basically. At this point, she regretted not learning more of the language. Trying to search for something without knowing how read was tedious, and with Okita teasing her, it didn't help the situation.

Displaying his usual smirk, he said, "I've found a few things you're looking for." He nodded his head in the direction of where he found them.

"Then why didn't you say so?"

"You looked kind of cute, looking so hard, even though you can't read." He mused and walked away. Kira widened her eyes and glared at his back before following him.

After turning at a corner, Okita pulled out a small bundle of paper and handed it to her. Lifting a brow, she offered it back to him, "You're having fun with this, aren't you? Genius, I can't read this."

He kept his smile and took it back and flipped through the pages. Kira could smell the rush of aged paper and ink from the little book and cringed slightly. The smell of books wasn't her favorite.

A long pause.

Kira shifted and probed. "Well?"

"I'm _reading_."

She stood next to him, looking at the foreign characters. It looked like a jumbled mess, not even sure which way to read it. And that wasn't the only thing that she was focusing on.

She could hear his steady breathing, and catch a whiff of his faint, masculine scent. Kira was having a hard time focusing on pretending to read. It was so overwhelming.

"Hey." His voice snapped her out of her trance.

"Hmm?"

"There's not much. It's pretty vague," he said, skimming over a few more characters.

"Well that's just the first page."

"Ahh, you want me to read the entire thing?" He pretended to sound frustrated, but took out a few more books either way. Taking a seat, he patted the spot next to him, and Kira followed, sitting on the cold, wooden floor.

"We might as well use up this hour." She said and stretched out her legs, and then reaching out to touch her heels. Force of habit due to dancing. "Now start reading." Kira sat up and looked at him, and then at the pages.

"Yes, ma'am," he mocked and flipped a page, "want me to read it to you?"

Kira was unsure if he was joking or not, so she gave him a little shrug with a subtle nod.

Throughout that hour, Okita managed to read to Kira three quarters of the book. From what he was saying, the book was just describing demons in general, how devious and malicious they could be. They brought undesirable things to humans: curses and plagues. They're described as powerful and hideous, something Kira would agree on. Immense strength and those piercing eyes, inhuman radiated off of the demons she met, though they didn't match the ogre-like description of them.

Yes, there were no descriptions of individual demons, something Kira found annoying. It was like this trip was for nothing. Her questions were still unanswered.

"Hnnnâ€¦" she stretched and stood up. "I guess we'll call it quits. We need to head back."

"Really? And we were just getting to the good part!" He sounded like a kid. "I thought you wanted to go through the entire thing!"

"It's not worth it." She replied. "Besides, I don't want to get you in troubleâ€¦or get caught by Kazama."

"Please, Hijikata-san is nothing." He chuckled and stood, returning the books to the proper spots. "But if Kira-chan insists." Okita shrugged.

Kira nodded, feeling the disappointment settle in. She was back to square one. She pursed her lips and headed for the door, only to get stopped by a gentle tug on her wrist.

"Kira-chan."

No sound of teasing was in his voice. It sounded serious. She looked over her shoulder. "Yeah?"

"Don't worry, you'll find answers soon." Emerald eyes met hazel. They felt sincere. Completely different than the playful glint she was familiar with. She couldn't help the small smile that curled her lips. These were one of these rare moments, when she saw him as a normal guy, instead of a flirt.

"Hopefully" her voice was soft.

Together, they left and started their trip to headquarters. Kira didn't realize they were holding hands all the way back until she finally got past the gates.

* * *

><p>Kira is finally noticing smaller details about Okita~ developing an attraction maybe~ This has broken my 1,500 word minimum. Sorry for the crazy short chapter, it's just that this was a ridiculously slow part of the story, and the next chapter is much more eventful. (Felt like adding some more bonding time for these two) I don't expect a lot of reviews for this chapter, but they're still appreciated~

~Jen

12. Flame's Flicker

Nothing to say~ Enjoy this chapter

I don't own Hakuoki or any of the characters besides Kira.

* * *

><p>It was a quiet summer day. The summer heat was just enough to make people want to stay inside, except for Kira. Sitting out in the grass in headquarters, she let the sun beat down on her. It felt nice.<p>

And the silence was ruined by a pair of fast and loud footsteps, until, "Kira-chan!"

She blinked and immediately got up. "What? What? What's wrong-? Oh, Akina-chan. How did you get in here?"

"I walked in." She smiled. "Are you doing anything tonight?" Her face was glowing with excitement.

She shook her head. "Why do you ask?"

"It's August fifteen! The Obon Festival!"

Kira furrowed her brows. "The what?"

"Ahh, right, you're not from here." Akina sighed, with a smile still plastered on her face. "It's"

"Oh, Akina-chan, when did you show up?" Heisuke asked, stepping out of a room and closing the door behind him.

"Just now. I was wondering if Kira would like to go with me to the festival tonight."

Heisuke nodded. "Oh yeah, Obon. Are you?" He looked at Kira with a grin.

She shrugged. "I don't even know what it's about!"

"Hmm, we should ask Hijikata-san if you can go. You've been stuck in here for a while," Akina said thoughtfully, and immediately, she turned on her heels and walked away.

Akina visited a couple times after hearing that Kira was basically under house arrest. Kira didn't mind, since there weren't any attacks. She was able to breathe for a few days and she didn't want to change that.

Kira got up and went after her friend, curious where she was going. "Hey, where are you going?"

"To find Hijikata-san!"

"Oh, he's in his room, but you shouldn't bug him right now!" Heisuke called after them and quickly caught up to the two.

"What's so important about this festival anyways?" Kira asked no one in particular.

"It's to honor dead relatives. It's better than it sounds." Heisuke replied.

"Are you going?"

He nodded. "I'm sure Hijikata-san wouldn't mind you going too! You've never been to Kyoto before right?"

"Where is his room?" Akina asked as they headed down a small hall. They were wandering around the compound for a few minutes.

"You, uh, just past it." He pointed to a closed door, and Akina strutted up to it, excusing herself before sliding the door open.

Too late nowâ€| Kira shuffled in, along with Heisuke.

The three sat in a straight line, a few feet from Hijikata, who was writing something on his desk. "What do you want?" He asked without looking up.

"Hijikata-san! Can you let Kira-chan go to the festival tonight?" Akina asked without hesitation. Determination filled her voice, so it sounded more like a demand than a request.

"No."

Silence filled the room.

"No?" Akina blinked. Obviously she looked like she didn't like the sudden and blunt response. "Why? She's never been to a festival! Why not this one time?" She pressed.

Kira had no say in this. It was similar to her friend asking their dad if they could hang out with her for the day. She hated to egg on their dad, and remained quiet, letting her friend and her dad settle it. These were one of these situations, and she missed it.

"I don't have to explain myself." He said coolly and dipped the brush in the ink palette.

It was Heisuke's turn to speak up. "Aw c'mon Hijikata-san! Let Kira-chan have some freedom! It's not like _they_ will spring up! So many people will be in the streets."

"That's just the thing. What if they _do_ show up? Honestly, you kids need to think things through." He put his brush down and looked at them, and then at Kira. "Do you even want to go? You've been silent."

All eyes were on Kira.

"Wellâ€¦" she hated to be put on the spot. "It's not like I _don't_ want to goâ€¦I've never been to a festivalâ€¦" her voice was slow and trailed off into a whisper.

"Please Hijikata-san!" Akina exclaimed. "I'll be with her!"

"And what can you do if those demons show up?"

She sighed. "Do you always think of the worst outcomes?"

"I need to think of all outcomes, good and bad." A pause. "But, if Souji will go, then she can go." He sounded reluctant.

Heisuke pumped his fist in the air. "Yes! It'll be no problem for him to say yes! Kira-chan can go to her first festival!"

Akina clapped her hands together and smiled. "Thank you very much, Hijikata-san!"

Hijikata folded his arms and grumbled. "You can get out now, stop bothering me."

The three got up and headed out of his room, Heisuke and Akina being the most excited, while Kira just went along with it. It must be a big celebration then.

â€¦

"You're going to go with Kira-chan to the festival tonight." Akina said to Okita the second he walked outside to the garden. Heisuke left to do his patrols, leaving the girls sitting under the shade of a small tree.

Okita blinked. "Hah?"

"You heard me! Hijikata-san said she can only go if you go with her. And you don't have a choice." She was happier than she usually

was.

Okita looked at Kira for an explanation, but she just shrugged. "Just go along with it."

He grinned and mused, "Alright then! Kira-chan, you need to dress up cutely then!"

"Oh Kira-chan! It's gonna be so much fun!" Akina smiled. "Ah, we need to get you a new yukata!"

"Eh? Now?" Kira blinked.

"Yes!" Springing up to her feet, she tugged at Kira's arm, and she too stood. "You stay here." She pointed at Okita.

"Aww," he pouted. "But I want to see the cute yukata Kira picks out!"

"You'll see her after!" She protested and left with Kira in tow.

â€|

Kira felt like a doll, getting carefully dressed and getting her hair doneâ€"better yet, it was like getting her makeup done for a recital. These moments were chaotic, and that's why she did her makeup at home and had her mom help with her hair, getting a few touchups when they got to the recital.

Akina helped Kira pick out a white yukata with light green and pink floral print scattered all over the fabric. A light green obi was tied around her waist, and her hair was getting done by Akina.

The comb went through her hair as smooth as silk, and her gentle touches were just like her mom's surprisingly. With a few more strokes, she could fall asleep like a cat. She felt her hair get pulled up into a bun, and pins slid in place to keep it still.

"Almost finishedâ€|" Akina murmured and added something else in her hair before backing away from Kira. "Done!"

Kira turned to the mirror in her room and widened her eyes at her reflection. Her hair was pulled back in a low bun, and a flower adored the side of it with small strings of beads falling from the center of the white flower. "Wow."

"You look so pretty," Akina said in awe and readjusted the flower on Kira's head.

Kira nodded and faced her. Akina had her hair swept into a bun on the side with a jeweled pin keeping it in place. She wore a salmon colored yukata with a white floral pattern, different than Kira's. "So, are you ready?"

_Kira-chan, you need to dress up cutely then! _She didn't know why she thought of Okita at a time like this, but his words that echoed in her mind made her cheeks turn an very light shade of pink. "I guess so." She shrugged as she ghosted her fingers over the

flower.

"Great!" Akina grabbed her small purse and handed one to Kira before leaving the room.

It was sundown, and a few slivers of light poked above the horizon. The girls headed to the gates of headquarters, where Okita was waiting.

At the sound of their footsteps, Okita's eyes flickered to the girls, lingering at Kira before looking at the two of them. "Finally ready?" He asked with a grin.

They nodded.

"Well let's go then." He mused, and the three left, heading towards the large cluster of lights.

Children were running around laughing and carrying various snacks, while adults walked through the streets, looking at the vendors, and some observing the dances.

Kira never saw anything so lively. The pep rallies at school were nothing compared to this. Lanterns were strung, almost everywhere, and the sound of people talking filled the air. Not to mention the delicious smell of food.

Her face brightened, liking the atmosphere.

Near the center of the town, Kira saw a large drum atop a pedestal, beating a steady rhythm. A circle of dancers moved to the beat, children and adults.

"What are they doing?" Kira asked.

"Bon Odori," Akina replied with a smile. "You want to join?"

She widened her eyes. "I don't know what that is! I don't even know what this festival is all about!" She protested. Dancing in front of hundreds of people is what she did yearly, but learning a new dance with a crowd, she couldn't do that. Nope.

Okita nudged her. "Why don't you try it out, and then after I can tell you about it. I mean, you are a dancer." He lifted a brow and grinned.

Akina exclaimed. "You're a dancer? Then it'll be no problem!"

"If you come with me." She said to Okita, and folded her arms.

"Ahh, fine."

"Great!" Akina took Kira's wrist and quickly headed to the dance, where Okita followed shortly after.

Stepping in the circle, Akina said, "It's simple. Just follow what everyone else is doing."

With Akina to her left and Okita to her right, she nodded and looked at the other dancers and did her best to mimic their poses. "Like

this?"

Given a nod of approval, Kira then took a step to the right, moving along with the rest of the crowd, trying to blend in with everybody else.

Suddenly going in the opposite direction caught Kira off so many times, usually having Okita teasing her about it, followed by a playful slap to his shoulder. The dance was fun and casual. Nothing complex, as to what Akina said. The heavy and stressful things in her mind numbed away, and in this one point, she didn't even recall home. Her friends, school, or even the demons that were hunting her. She felt like this was just her, and her newly acquired friends, living in this time period as if she was here the whole time.

Within a few more rounds of dancing, the three called it quits and left the circle, watching as more and more joined in.

"You knowâ€|that wasn't so bad." Kira smiled to herself.

"Ahh, see?" Akina giggled and readjusted the pin in her hair. She looked around and her eyes flashed with realization. "Oh, I need to get backâ€|I need to catch up to my family." She gave the two an apologetic grin and bowed her head.

_That was sudden. _"Huh?"

"I leave you in Okita-san's care!" She laughed and walked away, waving at the two before slipping in the rest of the crowd.

Kira tilted her head and folded her arms. "You knowâ€|I don't think she needs to see her family." She smiled bitterly. Something deep inside her was saying that she was set up by Akina.

"Hey, maybe she's telling the truth." Okita shrugged. "Maybe she's going to get a lantern for later tonight."

"Why does she need a lantern?"

"Toro nagashi." He said simply.

She shook her head. "Stop talking like I know this stuff! Just tell me what this festival is about, please?"

He emitted a low chuckle. "Fine, fine. This is the Obon festival. It's for when dead relatives visit this world, and to family members. To honor dead relatives, and at the end of the festival, we have toro nagashi. That's when we let out paper lanterns on the water, it guides the spirits back. The lanterns on the water is a pleasant view."

Sweet. She never expected a festival honoring the dead could be so lively, but she never paid attention to things outside the U.S.A.

"Hey, want to get some dango? You're favorite." he mused.

"I never said it was my favorite!" She said, followed by a quick "sure".

Heading to the stand, they ordered a small plate of dango, and continued to walk through the well-lit city. Taking a bite out of one of the few things she knew she liked her, she asked, "So when is toro naa€|naa€|"

"a€|_nagashi_? Can't say. I usually follow everyone else's lead and get a lantern when everyone else does."

"Do the rest of the Shinsengumi participate?"

"Yeah. I bet they're around here somewhere."

Kira nodded and reached for another set of dango, only to get it snatched away from her fingertips. "Hey! That was mine!" She protested.

"You're just like Heisuke and Shinpachi-san during mealtime," he chuckled, "I got it first! You need to be faster."

She scowled at him and took another stick. She took another bite when he asked, "Do you do something similar back home?"

"Noa€| maybe in other countries. Well, Halloween has similar principles. It was originally called All Hallow's Eve, and it was this big thing back then. But nowa€|kids just wander door-to-door in costumes and get free candy."

He nodded and paused. "Wherea€| _are_ you from anyways?"

She stopped walking for a moment, having a feeling that question would pop up eventually. Regaining her footwork, she replied, "America."

"Oh, you're a westerner?" He blinked in surprise. "Well, that explains a lot actually ever since you got here. But what are you doing all the way in Japan? Family here?"

"Wella€|I don't know." She was searching for a good excuse. "I must've hit my heada€|or something. But I know I don't have family here."

"Hehhh, I guess that explains a few more things too."

She lifted a brow. "What do you mean by that?"

"Nothing." He smirked.

She waved her hand dismissively at it. "Whatever."

Walking through the rest of Kyoto and back, circling the same vendors, the two continued to poke fun at each other. Commenting about the differences of things they do, answering and asking questions. He even had her talking about Bryn's dramatic childhood and the crazy adventures she's been on. Though Okita didn't mention anything about his childhood, reminiscing only a few years back. And whenever Kira indirectly brought it up, he would shrug it off and say something off topic.

At that point, she didn't consider him an annoying bodyguard who liked to tease her. More of a guy, a friend, casually making fun of

her. Kazama and the others were never brought up, nor hinted. The Raesetsu and Miho wasn't mentioned, but Okita did make fun of her lack of skills with a sword.

For that hour, she suddenly built up a resistance to his teasing, trying to detect whenever a smart remark would pop up. There were a few times when she would turn the tables.

She felt normal.

Once again, she forgotten the fact that she wasn't from here. It felt like a dream. The lanterns and the warm atmosphere increased the feeling.

Reaching an empty area where the river was, the two stood near a tree. It was quiet, and in the distance, she could see the cluster of lights of the festival.

The water lapped over the shore with gentle splashes. Crickets' chirps replaced the music, but the Obon drums could still be heard. It was faint, but audible.

"It's been a while since I've been here." He said as he rested his arm on the trunk.

"Patrols?"

"Yeah. We've been so busy, and it was unbearably hot earlier in the summer, so I stayed inside when I was off duty."

"Ahh. It's funnyâ€¦ I never imagined you to be outside headquarters if you weren't on patrol." She smiled.

"Hey, I eat out with the guys once in a while." He protested. "You need to stop focusing on just one trait of a person."

"Well maybe you need to show me these _other_ traits. I haven't been here long."

"What do you think I'm doing right now?"

"What you're _doing_ is talking about yourself!"

He was silent, followed by a sigh. She could see in the pale moonlight that he was smiling still.

Defeated. "Hah, I got you." Giggled Kira.

"Don't rub it in." He scowled.

She tilted her head to the side. _I'll try not to. _

The two stood in silence, just looking at the horizon, taking in each other's company. But it only lasted a few minutes.

"Hmmâ€¦ it's been a while since we danced." He murmured.

"But we just did," she replied, catching every word, "and I'm not going all the way back there."

"I'm not talking about that, idiot." He chuckled. "I'm talking about in headquarters. What was it?"

"Waltzing."

"Yeah, that."

"You want to do that now? Why so suddenly?"

"I want to try out my skills. But we have no music." He looked at her. "And I'm bored."

It was beyond her as to why he wanted to waltz so suddenly. "But we might step in the water."

"It's not even deep. Water won't kill your feet." He pressed.

She pursed her lips and drawled out, "Fine!" slipping her sandals off, she placed them near the tree. "Those things are killing me. No arch support. You remember the steps?"

"Maybe."

Rolling her eyes, she stepped in front of him and put one hand on his broad shoulder, and the other slipped in his hand. "If you step on my feet, I'll kill you."

"Hey! That's my line." He laughed and held her hand up, and then placed his other on her waist. It has been a while. She just hoped that she didn't forget herself, or there would be a lot of mistakes.

"One," she counted softly, and Okita stepped back. "Two" another step. "three." Each step was fluid. No hesitation, as if he didn't need the count. She drowned out the beat of the drums and went at her own pace. It was then when she realized she never looked up at him, and always their feet so they wouldn't step on each other.

Her gaze trailed up from the ground, and then finally met his eyes. He was looking straight at her, with a half-smile. Had he always been looking at her like that? And since when was she so short? And since when did she start to focus on how close they were?

Their bodies were mere centimeters away, and she could feel his breath.

She blinked away her thoughts. _Creeper Kira! Stop! _"U-uh, you're getting better." She said and awkwardly smiled.

"How nice. I'm getting praised by the master." His voice was low.

"I'm not a master, but I'm not bad at it."

The two continued to dance. Taking light footsteps that seemed to be in unison. Since she stopped counting, they went off in a different pace, slowing down every few seconds.

"You're different from other girls" he murmured.

"I'm not from here, so of course I stick out like a sore thumb."

He chuckled. "That's not what I meant," he paused, "part of it at least. You don't act how a lady should." She rolled her eyes. "You don't have outstanding traitsâ€" "

"Is this leading to anything good?" She furrowed her brows, ready to slip out of his hands the second he said anything else negative about her.

He went on as if uninterrupted. "But that's just it actually. You aren't from here, where every citizen hates the Shinsengumi. And you take chances and not be pathetically weak like all the women here." Another pause. "You should sometimes. That way I can be your knight in shining armor." He teased.

"Wow," she said sarcastically. "That was the best compliment ever. Actually, was that even a compliment?"

"You're different. It's nice."

"You could've said that instead."

"Ah, what's the fun in that?"

She shrugged, smiling at the fact that he complimented her either way.

And then they stopped dancing. Breaking eye contact, but not in touch. None of them made a move to step away. Kira's eyes wandered, staring at the grass, her bare feet and then down river. Noticing small patches of lights flicker in the distance like fireflies. "Heyâ€" I think they're starting."

He nodded. "Looks like it."

* * *

><p>End of part one. This scene is way too long to cram into one chapter, so two chapters seemed like a better option. The romantic tensionâ€" or something like that~ I've been _**dying**_** to type up this chapter and I had to stop myself from typing the fun parts of the story, like this one. Stay tuned for the next chapter. A review is appreciated! They help me out so much.**

***and I'm in the process of moving to Texas so I'm all over the place and I barely have any time. I'm moving December 20, talk about a Christmas bummer, so it'll be a while for me to adjust. Can't say when my next update will be sorry ;;* **

~Jen

13. Sparks

**Ahhh...it's been...almost a year! Wow! The move just made a toll on my body, mentally specifically and it has been a while to get used to. Now I'm starting my last year in high school and ommmgggg everything is happening to quickly! I apologize for not updating, or

telling you I'm alive! **

**Thank you so much to those people who still follow and favorite my stories. I still see people follow this story even though it's been ages since I've updated. You guys are the best! And I managed to get my plot finished, so let's wrap this story up! /rubs hands **

A review is much appreciated! I love to hear your comments on my chapters and it just keeps me going! Thank you so much! /hugs

* * *

><p>It dawned on her when she realized that they didn't stop to buy said paper lanterns. She stared at the ground, patting her sides as if she still wore jeans, and the lanterns were tucked away inside her pockets. "The lanternsâ€|we forgot about them!"<p>

"Geeze, you really don't pay attention, do you?" A ghost of a smile curled his lips as he pulled out two, small lanterns from his sleeves. Handing her one, he took out a pair of rocks and headed to the stream.

She could hide all of her stuff in her backpack with those kind of sleeves! She smiled at the fact and walked up beside Okita. In the distance, she saw the small, floating orb-like lights that placidly went down the water. It was like someone extended their hand and added sparkles in the water.

The rasp of rock sliding against rock hit her ears, and a pop emitted from the rocks, along with a little spark. Lighting the lantern, Okita handed her the rocks. She stared at them dumbly. _How...do I do this? _After a few meager attempts of how to get them to spark...and where to light it, she sighed and shoved the things she had in front of Okita, defeated. "Could youâ€|?"

Okita laughed in amusement. "You don't know how to light a lantern?"

"We use...different things to light candles! We never used...rocks," she trailed off, flustered.

Okita said nothing, but his face was illuminated by the small flame, showing the smile. Setting his lantern down, he easily lit Kira's lantern and handed it back to her. Kira barely murmured a thanks and crouched down.

This festival was honoring the dead right? Kira didn't have any close relatives die...staring at the lantern, she held gingerly by the bottom, she placed it in the stream and released it deftly. Slowly getting up, she watched as her small flame trekked down the stream, followed by clusters of lights. Though it seemed...lost.

Okita went down and placed his lantern in the water, giving it a gentle push before standing, putting his arms into his sleeves. His eyes seemed blank, or at least it seemed like he was thinking of other things.

Distant.

Blinking his emerald eyes, he looked at Kira and his friendly smile

returned. "Hmm?"

"Nothing!" She exclaimed, a bit too loudly. "It...it's nothing. You just seemed...distracted."

"Oh." He nodded thoughtfully. "Just thinking about my sister."

"You had a sister?"

"I did. It's ah...been a while since I've seen her." He said quietly. "She brought me to Kondou-san when I was little. Haven't seen her since."

Kira desperately tried to keep away from the awkward tension. "Sorry about that."

He shook his head, dismissing it. "Hey, if it weren't for her, I wouldn't have met Kondou-san and the others," a pause. "And you."

Heat suddenly rushed to her cheeks, but she pushed down the blush with all of her strength. "I guess so." Putting on hand on her arm, she continued to watch as the lanterns from the festival floated down the grand river.

"So," he said. "Have you fallen for me yet?" He inquired, lifting a brow.

"Wha-" playfully punching his shoulder, she sighed. "Why do you say that? That'll only just turn her away anyways. Stop teasing me," she emphasized her point with another punch.

Okita didn't flinch, only chuckled. "Sorry, sorry. I was just curious."

"Let's just go, I'm tired," she said and quickly spun on her heels, walking to where she put her sandals. But Okita stopped her.

"You're not going to watch? Besides, it's nice to be out when headquarters is so stuffy."

_Okay...that was a pretty pathetic escape route. _Kira slumped her shoulders. "If you would stop teasing me, then I _might_ stay." She took a seat against the tree, stretching out her legs.

He smiled to her and sat beside her, leaning up against the tree with his hands behind his head. "I promise."

Kira's heartbeat was strong...and speeding up. Her stomach knotted and continued to constrict. _What the hell is wrong with me! _She glanced at Okita and then back at the lanterns. It was a beautiful sight to see. It was like a dream, lights swirling around and picking her up.

"Soâ€¦" she said, breaking the ice. "How many festivals are there?"

"Hmm," he sounded distant. But he was brought right back. "Well, there's Gion Matsuri. Oban...Jidai Masturi," a pause. "Why do you ask?"

"I was curious. We don't have things like these back home." said Kira, tucking some stray hair behind her ear.

"Or maybe you want to go with me to every festival here?" He laughed, followed by Kira smacking his shoulder. "Hey," he rubbed his arm. "You'll give me a bruise there." He feigned hurt.

"I told you not to tease me." She countered. "So how long are we going to stay out here?" Kira held back a yawn and shoved it back down her throat.

"Usually I wait until all the lanterns float by. Sometimes I just sleep until morning. Man," he chuckled, "Hijikata-san would throw a fit if we don't come back. He might think that I've run away with you or something."

She arched a brow. "Really? I mean, you're not _that _bad...just annoying."

It felt like ages as the lanterns went down the river, and she could still see more in the distance. Sleep was taking over her, and her eyelids were getting heavy. Kira shook her head and turned her body to Okita, extending her hand at him.

He looked at her confused. "What are you doing?"

Kira glanced at her hand. "A thumb war. You've never played?" She didn't give him time to respond. "Just take my hand." He held his hand with hers. Kira's thumb straightened up. "Okay, get your thumb like this...and on the count of three, you need to try to pin my thumb down for three seconds. One...two...three!" The two went at it, though Kira was having difficulty getting to his thumb since it was so huge, and he kept on moving it away so she couldn't reach it. She made a frustrated noise. "Quit cheating."

"I'm pretty sure I haven't broken any rule." He said, focused on the war. "Is this something you'd play back home?"

"Usually kids would play it, but my friends and I still do it when we're bored." She gripped his hand tighter, her nails digging into his callused hands.

"Hey! Now you're cheating!" He didn't wince though and looped around her thumb, getting closer and closer to winning.

"I should make it even somehow! Your hand is huge." Every time she would reach his thumb, he would move it back. Then he snapped it back, pinning hers to curled fingers. "No!" She exclaimed and tried to break free.

He chuckled. "One...two...three! I win," he smiled, he seemed like he was pleased.

"Yeahâ€¦" she rolled her eyes. What did she expect? The second they held hands, she knew he would win. He would wield a sword every day, so of course that was expected. Kira tugged at her hand, still held captive by his. "You can let go now."

"You don't want to go again?" Still didn't let go of her hand.

Kira pursed her lips. "We could play slaps?" She managed to wriggle her hand free and held out her palms, face up. "Put your hands on mine." He did so. "So...the person on the bottom has to slap the person's hands on top. If I miss, then you'll be at the bottom." Kira grazed her fingers along Okita's palms, wondering if it was distracting him, though he didn't seem like it. Kira yelled and jerked her hands, but didn't slap him. Bluffing. Okita didn't move an inch. "What?! Oh come on!"

"It's pretty easy to tell if you're bluffing or not. Your hands keep on shaking." He grinned. "All samurai must know when and how their enemy will strike."

"I have a feeling I'm going to lose," she quickly tried to slap his hands, but he dodged quickly, "...again."

He grinned and put his palms face up, her hands on top of his. Kira was nervous now. "Relax, I'm not going to hurt you, geeze." Literally at light speed, his hands slapped hers.

"Ow!" Kira shook her hands. "That stung. Could you at least give me a break? It's...been a while since I've played," she said pathetically.

"You need to think of a better excuse than that. Maybe you're just not as good as you thought you were."

Something snapped in her. "Ohhh, you did _not_ just say that!" She put her hands on top of his. Waiting...he moved...and he missed. Okita only grinned and their roles were switched. Moving one hand, she slapped his opposite hand and cheered too excitedly.

"Hey! That was a dirty move." He pouted.

"Oh shush." They restarted. She swung, he dodged.

Kira couldn't tell how long they were playing, but the lanterns' lights were starting to fade down the horizon. Not to mention her hands were stinging, no doubt red. Hiding her hands in her sleeves, seeking refuge after the intense rounds of slaps, she slowly rose to her feet, slipping her sandals on.

It was dark...really dark. All Kira could see were the lights from the festival in the near distance. "We should get back," she said.

Nothing. It was dead still; no wind...no crickets or anything. A shiver ran up her spine and she let out a quieter voice. "Okita?" She sighed and remained composed, back straight and eyes searching, though it was pitch black out. "This isn't funny, let's go."

And then she felt something behind her..she could feel heat emit from behind her, and this very soft breathing pattern. "Boo," he said lowly in her ear.

Her skin crawled and she jumped. "God!" She spun around and swatted blindly at him. "Don't do that!"

"Sorry, sorry," he chuckled. "I thought you would hear me, guess not."

Your observation skills aren't the best."

She pursed her lips and stared at his general direction. "Let's just go. As much as I would like to ditch you, you're kinda my tour guide." Kira could sense his cheeky smile.

"Hey, could we play that slap game-whatever it's called?"

Kira unconsciously rubbed her forehands. She could still feel the sting. "You just want me to lose again." She pressed, "Let's go, Okita."

"You're no fun," he mused. "C'mon, just one more round."

She heaved in a sigh and took her hands out from their sleeve shelters. "One more." She placed her hands on the bottom and waited for Okita to blindly find hers. And then it started.

Swing. Hit.

Swing. Miss.

They switched roles. Kira got nervous again, ready for her hands to get smacked like she was getting punished. As Okita jerked his hands, Kira's hand retracted fast...but was suddenly pulled back. His hand held her tightly, leaving no room for her to wriggle free. There were no words exchanged, but a surprised noise.

She could feel his warm breath mingling with hers. His body heat transferring into her as they held hands that warmed the ice she never knew she had.

It was like he hesitated...silently waiting for her to shove him away. But Kira was rooted to the ground.

Seconds felt like minutes as the gap was filled, Kira wasn't sure who moved closer. She could feel his soft lips meld with hers. Her body tingled, and bumps grew along her arms and legs despite what she was wearing. A thrill went up her spine and the spark that clashed with it just sent her heart racing at dizzying speeds. For that moment, it felt like he was the only safe place in this evil riddled world.

Blood rushed her her head as it swam in its own sea of confusion. The needle was spinning out of control, trying to find North repeatedly, but it just got more confused.

As the kiss broke apart slowly, a bubbling pot at her toes let out a low rumble and the steam shot up like a cannon and blew the needle off its compass, and Kira's cheeks were flushed pink. Okita gave her hands a gentle squeeze and murmured something her frazzled self couldn't pick up.

Kira slowly took her hands away and the fog lifted. "...let's head back nowâ€|" Okita said.

* * *

><p>Removing her hair piece and bun with slow and shaky fingers, she got out of her festival garb and slipped into a sleeping yukata. Her

eyes were hooded, dazed...entranced.<p>

The walk home was silent and fuzzy. Kira couldn't remember what happened until they got to the gate of Headquarters. The two parted ways, murmuring low 'goodnight's and slipped into their rooms.

Half asleep, she fell on her futon, slowly wrapping herself in the sheets. On her back, she looked up at the dark ceiling. She could hear her heartbeat thud in her ears.

A gentle whisper ran through her memory's ears, and a familiar masculine voice floated lazily in her head. "_I think I like youâ€|_"

With that, she closed her eyes.

* * *

><p>Whoop, there it is! This was the most tedious chapter I have ever written. I hoped you all liked it ;D Now that this mountain is out of the way, we can move along...with even more drama.

Another thank you to everyone. Your kind words over the years just helped me get back in my groove, and I managed to get the plot written down in an hour. You are seriously the best and I don't know how to repay you guys! It's nearly been a year since I've updated, so hopefully you all didn't leave this story. I'm planning on finishing this in the near future, but I don't know when the next update will be. I would want to say at **_least a month**_**, but this is a pretty rough start to a school year. I have all-region auditions **_**which is the worst thing ever that has been created in the music world**_** and my new classes are demanding more from me. Nevertheless, I will update this story when time permits me.
**

Please don't forget to leave a_** review/favorite/follow**_** this story, your support helps a lot! **

~Jen

14. That Only Girl

** I said I'm going to update this story, and I'm sticking to my word. Thank you for your kind reviews. It makes me feel good to know that people still read my story. :D So I left things off on a high note...I wonder what will happen~ Hope you enjoy the chapter!**

* * *

><p>It had been a few days later after the festival. The town was reverted back to its normal self, with people walking up and down the streets, stopping at vendors. Everything seemed pretty normal...except for the painfully awkward tension between Kira and Okita. The two didn't talk much and were barely seen with each other. Kira didn't know if that was a real confession or it was a play on her mind.<p>

The group sat together for breakfast. In absolute silence. Kira sat

in between Heisuke and Harada with Okita on the other side of her, keeping his eyes on his food.

Heisuke was the brave one to break the ice. "Kira-chan...are you okay?" All eyes were on her. She felt a chill run up her spine.

She shoveled in the last bit of rice she had in the bowl and set it down. "I'm fine, why do you ask?" She arched a brow at him.

He grinned nervously at her look. "You ahh...seem out of it."

"Ah, did something happen between you and Souji?" Harada grinned, elbowing her side. Kira smacked his arm away, unaware that Okita's head looked up for a split second before going back to his food again.

"O-of course not!" She bit her tongue for stuttering. "It's just...the past few days were off days for me!"

Saito's low voice hammered away at the last bit of tension. "Harada's assumption is correctâ€¦"

Kira struggled to keep calm. "Don't be ridiculous," she stared at Saito before shoving Heisuke over. Over the weeks spending time with them all, it was safe to say that she was comfortable around them...minus Okita. She treated Heisuke especially like the brother she never had. "Thanks for bringing this up! There's no relevance to anything!"

Heisuke used his arm to keep himself from falling and straightened himself up. "Kira-chan!" He groaned, "You know I don't hit girls!" The long pony-tailed kid scrambled to his feet and stalked over to Harada, giving him a few punches to the shoulder.

"Oi! What the hell, bastard!" Harada exclaimed and grabbed Heisuke's wrist, pulling him down and slamming him onto the floor.

"I can't punch her, so I just hit you!"

And the fight began.

Shinpachi laughed at the two and grinned at Kira. "Well, you sure know how to start things!"

As the two continued to duke it out, Saito grabbed his empty tray and silently excused himself, slipping out of the room quietly. Amongst the chaos that arose in the room, Kira retreated into herself. It had been a few days...she could still remember that moment vividly. Her hand went to touch her lips, but suddenly stopped and nearly forced it in her lap.

Her heart hammered against her chest, ready to burst forth. The thought of that kiss just made it all worse. Was he teasing...or was it real? He had been teasing her ever since she ungracefully fell in this world. She puffed out her cheeks at the floor.

Pulling her eyes off the floor, she looked at the bickering samurai. Hijikata set his bowl down and exclaimed, "Oi!" Demon Vice-Commander was resurfacing. "Knock it off!"

The two looked at them, and which Harada had Heisuke in a chokehold. Harada immediately let go and shoved him hard. "Yeah Heisuke," he sounded serious, but his smile proved it otherwise. "Stop picking on adults, little boy."

"I'm not a kid!" He yelled.

"Just sit down before you hurt yourself," Kira joked, finally jumping into the conversation.

He groaned loudly and swiped his tray off the ground. "I'm done eating!" He stuck his tongue out at Kira and marched out of the room.

Harada let out a chuckle and smiled at Kira. Hijikata sighed and pinched the bridge of his nose. "Honestly, Kira. You just make Heisuke even worse."

She smiled sheepishly and then glanced at Okita. He seemed distant...just like at the festival. Her stomach knotted slowly as she continued to look at his facial features. Apathetic gaze. Gloomy aura. She started to wonder if he was sick.

"Souji, what's the matter with you?" Hijikata asked, snapping Kira out of her stare.

He looked up, his gaze not changing. "Ah, couldn't sleep much last night." The humor in his voice was sucked out and what was left was this dazed voice.

"Do you think you can still do your patrol for tonight?"

"I'm tired," a half-smirk curled his lips, "not sick. I can still do it." And then his gaze finally met Kira's, as if expecting something from her. She shifted uncomfortably under his gaze, now wanting to avoid him.

"What is it?" She asked, almost glaring at him.

"...nothing."

* * *

><p>Night fell, and the Shinsengumi set out their units to patrol the city. Harada's unit was sent in the opposite direction. Kyoto was still and empty. A shiver ran up Kira's spine, suddenly remembering the rabid demons that tried to kill her several times when she first got here. And then there was Kazamaâ€|<p>

Kira folded her arms, her hands slipping in the sleeves to somehow keep herself warm. The two walked side-by-side with the rest of the division behind them. "You're not cold are you? It's pretty warm right now." Okita said to her.

"Not coldâ€|" she replied. She couldn't bring herself up to start a conversation, suddenly feeling nervous around him. Kira took her hands out of her sleeves and ignored the nervous chills.

Silence.

"So why are you avoiding me?" He asked.

She widened her eyes and felt her heart drop into her stomach, which knotted into a pretzel. "What do you mean?" The hairs on the back of her neck rose.

>"I mean," he sighed and looked up at the clear, night sky. "After the festival, you wouldn't talk to me...at least not as much. Whenever I look at you, you avoid my gaze."<p>

"Can we please not talk about this _now_?"

"Tch." He rolled his eyes. "I really don't get you."

Their hands brushed up against each other. A shock went up her arm and she quickly folded her arms again. "See, you did it again!" Okita said.

"I didn't do anything!" She defended. The men behind them started to murmur amongst themselves, as if they were a couple, fighting. Okita looked over his shoulder and stared at them. "Oi, shut up and keep alert." They straightened up and remained silent. Okita narrowed his eyes at Kira, trying to break down the wall she built between them.

"Y-you should focus too! Don't wanna be jumped." Kira huffed, immediately peeling her eyes away from him.

The small unit kept walking through the empty streets until a bloodcurdling scream ran through the air. Okita and his men drew their swords as they followed the sound. Further up the road, the girl's voice grew familiar.

"Leave me alone! What did you do to Mi-chan?!" Akina exclaimed as she scrambled to her feet. Just a few feet across from her was a green-haired demon.

_What is she doing hereâ€|?! _Kira's body tensed the minute she saw that demon. The same one who terrorized her earlier. "That'sâ€| that's her! The intruder!" Kira finally exclaimed. "We need to help Akina!"

"Oi, you heard what she said," Okita's voice rose over the chaos and Maeko turned her head. "Leave her alone, or I'll cut you down myself." He pointed his katana at her.

"Hmm," Maeko purred. "How amusing. Do you think mere threats will stop me? I am a demon, and I can crush you easily." She took a few more steps towards a trembling Akina. Maeko drew her clawed hand back and had it shot at Akina's neck. Kira cursed at herself before breaking into a sprint, ignoring Okita as she bodyslammed Maeko on her side. The girls went falling to the ground, but Kira regained her balance and said to Akina, "Get out of here!"

"Eh!? I can't leave you here, Kira-chan!"

"Just _run_!" Kira reached out to touch her shoulder, but she went through air. Her hand stopped and waved through Akina's shoulder. Kira widened her eyes as she pulled her hand back. "W...what?" The illusion of Akina made Kira's mind go blank.

Okita was the first to realize it. "Kira! Get out of there! It's a trap!" He yelled as he dashed over to her, followed by his soldiers. Akina-phantom's frown slowly formed into a warped smirk before her body slowly turned to dust, disappearing as if a wind came and swept her body away.

Kira was starting to panic. "What the hell is going on-" As Okita tried to reach for her, she disappeared. He stumbled forward and turned when he heard the green-haired demon's voice.

"You humans are pathetic," she laughed. "To think that if I were to try to steal her earlier, she would've been gone now. This is too easy." She had an arm wrapped around Kira's shoulders. Kira had her hands gripping tightly on her forearm trying to pry herself free. Maeko's strength was crushing her collarbone and shoulders. Kira let out a distressed cry, imagining her bones breaking. "Aaaagh!"

"Kira! Let her go, demon," Okita snarled.

The soldiers had their katana's pointing at Maeko's small body, waiting for orders. Okita cursed under his breath, his grip tightening on the katana.

"I'll crush her lungs if you dare make a move." She tightened her grip around Kira, earning her another pained cry. Kira's nails dug into Maeko's arm, but she didn't flinch. "How about this, if I leave with her, I'll spare your lives." She said thoughtfully, "_Or, _you can pathetically try to save her, both of you dying in the process. This girl unlocks many opportunities for us demons, and I much rather keep her alive...until I don't need her," she whispered sinisterly.

"Go!" Kira said weakly. "I'm fine!"

Okita stood there, going out of his mind. He wanted to cut this demon's throat, but hesitated. He didn't want to hurt Kira, let alone indirectly kill her. "Dammit!"

Maeko hummed, "If you want to _try_ to save her, go west of Kyoto. You'll find my mansion. You won't have any trouble spotting it," she giggled. "Though she might be gone by the time you get there."

A chill ran up Kira's spine and her heart went still, skipping a beat. She wasn't sure what to do. It didn't seem real to her, but the arm crushing her was enough to convince her. Kira couldn't cry...say anything at all! It was like she was in a locked, soundproof room and no matter how much noise she made, no one could hear her.

"I hereby decree that the war has started between humans and oni. Get ready for hell," Maeko grinned evilly. Kira looked at Okita, terrified, silently begging for help of any kind.

And then the two disappeared into the night sky.

It was quiet again.

The soldiers waited for his orders, but Okita just stood there, anger and regret swirled through him. He should've been more patient. But couldn't she have realized it over the past few days? Honestly, girls

were so weird.

The only girl he had really gotten to know...the only girl he held feelings for that were more than just friends. Swept away from him. He gripped his sword and cursed under his breath. He wasn't going to let her go so easily. He still had a chance and he wasn't going to miss it. Goddammit, he wasn't going to let her get killed without getting to her first.

"S...sir?" a soldier asked.

"We're going on ahead to find this damn mansion. Go to Headquarters and get reinforcements. If the oni wants a war, she'll get one."

"Understood, Captain!" he said before running off.

Okita looked at the spot where the two were at. He remembered those horrified eyes. He felt suddenly guilty. What kind of captain was he when he couldn't have just grabbed Kira. That oni must be bluffing. Right?

* * *

><p>"I don't want to hurt you!"

_His eyes widened, as if insulted by the very words. "_Hurt_ me? For God's sake, you're fucking ripping my heart out!" He took a powerful swing at her, and she jumped with a surprised noise. "The only person I cared about," he said, taking a swing with each phrase. The edge of her sword missing and colliding with her sword. "The only person I let in...is leaving after everything?!" _

She cried out as their swords clashed with a harsh rasp of metal. Her arms were shaking, cowering against his strength and rage. Her hands stung, begging to let go of the sword, but she still held on. "Please-" she begged.

He wasn't going to hear it. "You're pretty cruel," his smile was still there. Over the time they spent, she forgot the darker side of him. Sadistic, cruel, sly. "You just come in here and steal away my heart. And you don't even know what to do with it instead of crushing it, and handing it back."

_Tears welled up in her eyes. "Stop it! I...I just want to stop this and go home!" Half of his words only sunk in. She was filled with fear and shoved out everything else. _

"_Go home? What do you have there?" He asked curtly. _

"_Friends and family! People I've grown up for years!" She tried not to choke on the words. _

"_Tch, don't fool me. According to what you said, it wasn't anything spectacular! There was nothing that stood out in that world!" She could hear the desperate plea in his argument. _

"_I had my future ahead of me!" _

_Their swords clashed again. Their faces were divided by the crossing

swords. "What if I wanted my future with you?! Dammit Kira, get it through that thick skull of yours! I love you."_

"_Whatâ€|" the katana's retracted, and then hers was abruptly knocked out of her hands. The metal clattered loudly on the floor. Kira's shaking hands were stinging and her heart dropped down to her stomach, realizing what was next. _

"_But if you don't want me...then I guess I have no choice.." he said. Tears streamed down her face like cascading waterfalls. Eyes blurry with tears, she closed them. _

She heard it. The tear of skin from that blade.

* * *

><p>Woo! Short chapter-kinda, sorry! Kira is pretty dense when it comes to love xD Though I would probably be dazed if I were her. Probably...maybe...depends. Anywho, I hoped you enjoyed the chapter! Please leave your _**review**_**! They help me out a lot! Thank you! Until next time. And I think it's safe to say that I will update once a week, since I'm already working on chapter 16! We're finally gonna wrap up this story after a year or so of me being dead xD**

**_Jen **

15. Separated

Fun part! Fun part! Ahhhh, we're a few chapters away from finishing this story! Around 20 some chapters this story will have. I'm typing away at these chapters like there's no tomorrow! Long story short, I'm very excited. Enjoy the chapter!

* * *

><p>Kira opened her eyes rather slowly. The girl was lying on a cold floor, and she could feel its chill seep into the back of her yukata. And then she was bombarded with tears. Covering her mouth, as if trying to keep in her strangled cries, she hiccuped as the nightmare kept on replaying like a broken record.<p>

She furiously wiped her tears away with her sleeve, but to no avail. That dream was a nightmare. _The hell was that?! _"...my God.." she murmured as she sniffed and slowly sat up. Rubbing her tears away only made more cascade down her cheeks. Distracting herself, she turned on one side, hearing a satisfying roll of cracks and then to the other. The floor wasn't the best place to sleep-

Where was she? Her nails scratched along the stone floor. Iron bars stood a few feet away from her with a torch mounted on the wall. The crackle from the burning wood echoed in the prison-like cave.

Drying the rest of her tears, she got up, her legs rejoicing after being still for so long. Stiff legs carried her to the bars. Holding onto the bars, she peered around to see if there was any other sign of life. "...hello?" she asked softly.

Kira stretched out her arms above her head, wincing in the process.

Letting out a pained noise, she ran a hand gingerly along her collarbone.

That demon had her. Okita was literally right there. Kira widened her eyes and exasperated, resting her forehead on the bars. _If I just listened to him-_ she looked around and walked back to explore the rest of her cell. _Ah, what am I kidding, I would never listen to him. _Her hands felt around for a keyhole, successfully finding one. But she came to the realization that she couldn't be like those movie stars and take out a bobby pin and magically pick the lock. She sighed.

It was a small box-the cell was-and dark. The floors and walls were made of stone, not really chiseled cleanly. Her toes scrunched against the cold floors and a shiver ran up her spine. Hugging herself, she leaned against the wall and looked up. A small window with bars let out small rays of light from the stars and moon. And there was no way she bust it open, let alone climb up to it.

"It's about time you woke up," a baritone voice said.

Her heart jumped, knowing very well who that was. "Came to gloat?"

"No. I'm bored of that bitch's game, now I know her true intention."

Kira suddenly realized that she was crying...in front of _this_ guy! She swore under her breath and furiously rubbed away the tear streaks, leaving her cheeks bright pink.

"Big deal, you cried." He said. "I don't think I've ever seen you cry. It's okay to do that once in a while, considering your situation." Why was he being so nice to her.

She brought up her eyes to meet his. He seemed apathetic rather than menacing. Like a bored teenage boy in pre-calc. "What's her name? And...what's all this about?" Kira ignored what he said completely. She wasn't in the mood to bring that up.

Kira held onto a bit of hope as to see if he would actually tell her anything. And hoping was worth it. "Her name is Maeko. The most annoying oni I have ever encountered. She meddles too much with the pathetic humans." He sound as if disgusted saying her name.

She kept silent, quietly urging him to go on.

"She hasn't told me much, but she says that you are the key to unlock a portal to a new world."

"Earthâ€|?"

"This _is_ Earth." He responded curtly. "I thought you were smarter, guess I was wrong."

Kira wasn't afraid of him now...his spot was taken by Maeko. "I mean _my_ Earth in the future! I'm from a different country and time period."

He 'hmpfed' and looked away, his blood red eyes looked dull.

She pressed, "So where am I?"

"You're in the basement of her mansion. I only came here to see if she actually did manage to grab you."

"So you're not really interested in this anymore right?" She walked up to him. "Why not let me loose?" She thought...if he's a demon too, wouldn't he have the strength to tear out these bars? _He doesn't really like Maeko._

"Hmpf," a half-smile curled his lips. "I'm not stupid. If I do that, her fake demons will come after me. Not that I would have a problem cutting them down, but I would rather watch your dogs try and step inside the mansion without losing a hand. Or worse."

She gulped. "Fake demons," she murmured lowly. "You mean those...ah..what was it called." She snapped her fingers. "Rasetsu!" A pause. "She has them here?"

Kazama nodded. "I don't know how she got hold of those things, but they're scattered around the mansion. Your boyfriend won't stand a chance."

"B-boyfriend?!" She choked. "He's not! We aren't dating!"

The classic smirk was etched on his face. "I think it's pretty obvious. Though that dog doesn't seem to know how to convey his feelings." And with that, he turned and walked away. His footsteps echoed softly in the prison hold.

"Hey wait! You can't just say _that_ and leave me here!" She yelled, walking up and grabbing the bars. "Get back here!"

The golden-haired oni turned the corner, no longer interested. The door could be heard opening and closing. Kira was alone again, with lots of information...but she was trapped here still. _He couldn't have given me a hint?_

* * *

><p>The emerald-eyed unit captain and his division kept on heading in the direction they were told. His sword was itching to slash that oni's little body. He wanted Kira back, he wanted to know her answer.<p>

Usually this flirtatious captain won the ladies' hearts of Kyoto...but not this one. He had to try so many ways just to make her blush. Even a kiss didn't even convince her, or she was too much in a daze to even realize what was going on. _Foreign girls are so weird.

—

The unit was out of Kyoto, back in the countryside, and it was dark. The only lights were that of the farm houses. Definitely not an oni's mansion. It had been a couple hours, and no sign of a mansion or demons. If that demon was lying to him...he would find a way to find her and have her head. That little laugh and smile just drove him nuts.

"Captain," one soldier said.

"Yes." Okita said.

"It's been a while...and we haven't seen the mansion."

"Are you defying my orders? We've been on patrols longer than this! It's not hard to spot a mansion!" He growled back.

"Y-yes sir! Forgive me," he dipped his head before looking around for the building.

As the night continued to grow, the outside became still. The wind dropped and the chirp on insects stopped. They made it to a forest, pitch black. Okita narrowed his eyes and drew his sword, and his men followed suit. "Something isn't right here."

He was right. Deep within the shadows and bushes, pairs of red eyes opened one by one. Okita held up her sword, knowing those red eyes anywhere. Almost silently, the Rasetsu emerged from their hiding spots, drawing out their swords. Their motions were that of puppets. Demonic smiles took up most of their face.

"Blood!" one growled lowly.

"I...want blood!" Another screeched and lunged for the unit. And that's when the rest of the fake demons charged after them.

"The hell are these guys doing out here?!" One soldier exclaimed as he stabbed one in its side. But the wound just closed and the white-haired demons kept at it.

"We killed them if they escaped Headquarters!" Another said.

"Just calm down! We need to get past these guys," Okita replied as he deflected a blow, quickly stabbing the demon's heart. Blood splattered everywhere like paint as the body fell down, lifeless.

Since the Rasetsu were positioned here that meant that the mansion wasn't that far off. That ray of hope turned into streamers, as if the light were trying to break from its prison. Okita's heart pounded as he continued to cut down the demons, getting closer and closer to finding Kira.

Over time, the number of demons dwindled to a staggering one before Okita slashed it. Bodies laid everywhere around the unit, both parties covered in blood. Flicking the blade to one side, blood flung off the metal and spattered onto the dirt ground. Sheathing his blade, Okita said, "Let's go. It won't be long now."

Surely reinforcements would be coming now. He had a feeling they would need them if there were Rasetsu positioned out here.

You better be still alive.

"Sir!" A soldier shouted.

His hand immediately went to his sword, immediately pointing the blade to the shadow. As it stepped forward, the moonlight revealed those intricate tattoos and violet ponytail. "Ehh, another demon I

can cut down?"

"You wish," Shiranui scoffed. "I'm not here to fight you. It's just that we have no more interest in that human girl." One hand on his side, he had his head tilted slightly to the other, showing a lazy smirk.

"So what do you want?" He inquired, not putting his sword down.

"Nothing," he put his hands up in defense. "Just gonna give you a tip. She's in the basement at the mansion up ahead. It's not that far, but I suggest you hurry up before that bitch gets her."

"Why should we trust you?" He wanted that to be true, was she still alive? If she was...he had to kill her before Maeko would.

"Just think about it, I could've put a bullet in your head, but I didn't. And to be honest, both of us don't want to see Maeko win." He vanished before Okita could say anything. His jaw clenched as he sheathed his sword. "C'mon, men! That bastard better be telling the truth."

* * *

><p>Back to pacing in the cell, she looked at her not-options. Climbing. She wasn't good at climbing rocks, and busting those bars open was impossible. Her eyes flickered back to the door. Maybe it's rusted...and the door will suddenly fall if I touch it.

Walking back to it, she gave it a good tug. Nothing. Tapping her foot against the gate, she pushed it instead. With a harsh rasp of metal, the door swung open. Did Kazama unlock the gate when she was sleeping? Or did Maeko forget to lock it? She kept herself from jumping up and down out of happiness and slid through the opening.

_Don't get your hopes up. Maeko is around here somewhere. _Rounding the corner, she hurried to the stairs. Silently racing up the steps, she pressed her hand on the door, heart pounding. Grabbing the handle, she pushed it open. Lights from the lanterns flooded her eyes, making her squint. _Almost there. _Emerging from the basement, she closed the door behind her, finding herself in a hall. The floor and walls were made of wood, and sliding doors ran down the hall. Everything looked the same.

_Uhhh...where to go? _Left or right. Kira stood in the middle of the hallway like a sitting duck. She was getting excited about the fact that she was trying to sneak out. Let's face it, she never did this back home. She almost forgot about how dangerous this was.

Immediately turning on her heels, she went left. Turning the corner, she was faced with more paths. She sighed and slouched. There was no doubt she would get lost in here. Kira glanced over her shoulder and faced forward again, only to collide into a body. She held back a surprised noise and immediately backed away.

"You'll be caught if you keep on walking clumsily like that." Kazama

said.

She sighed and rubbed her nose. "Well if you keep on critiquing me on how to escape, why don't you show me the way?" Sarcasm dripped from her words.

She knew that he would say-"No."

"So you're just gonna stand by and watch everything go down?"

"Hmm, it's amusing to see those dogs get in the way of demons. They think they can waltz in here and kill them so easily." A pause. "But in this case, I expect them to get rid of Maeko."

Kira shook her head. "So let me get this straight, you won't help me or her. As in, you won't turn me into Maeko?"

"No."

She nodded. Folding her arms, she looked behind her and what was up ahead. "Could you at least give me a tip on how to get out of here."

He smirked. "Don't get caught."

Huffing, she walked past him, blindly turning left again. Fine, if he wasn't going to help her, she just had to help herself. Okita wouldn't just fly through a wall and save her. She had to make some progress on her own...at least until she would get caught, if she did. Fast walking down the halls, she kept her ears out for footsteps, voices...anything that weren't her own. But it seemed the mansion was still, without a sign of life inside.

Kira suddenly found herself in what looked like the foyer of the mansion. A grand set of doors were just a few steps away. Her heart hammered her chest as her walk turned into a jog. She wanted out, she wanted to find Okita, or any Shinsengumi member, knowing she wouldn't be safe until then.

Grabbing the handle, she gave it a good tug, only to hear a loud '_clack!_' Her heart started to sink. "No...no, no, no!" She muttered as she pulled it desperately, but the door wouldn't budge. She was so close.

A sinister giggle sounded behind her. Kira whipped her head back to see Maeko perched on the second floor balcony. In her left hand, she held a katana. Her green eyes glinted with cruel pleasure. "Did you really think I would let you out so easy? You must really be stupid." And then she disappeared.

This was just plain mean.

Maeko suddenly appeared a few feet in front of her. She was shorter than Kira, but her presence overwhelmed her. "I still need you for something important," she murmured.

"What...what do you want from me!?" Oh, how she wished she had a sword right now...at least something to stand in the way between that demon and herself.

"You're too noisy," venom dripped from her words. Drawing the katana, she pointed the blade at Kira. "I could just cut you down right now, and you wouldn't see your lover one last time."

Lover. "What-no, we're not together!"

She shrugged. "Your opinion is worthless, and that is the least important right now. Besides," she paused and pointed at the door. "If you did manage to open those doors, you wouldn't want to be out there. The fake demons would get to you within seconds. In fact," she sheathed her sword, "if you were to try to even move from that spot, they would get you as well." As if on cue, bodies emerged from the corners of the halls of the foyer. To her horror, about a dozen Rasetsu filled the foyer. Their eyes were a faded red, dazed from the lack of food...blood.

"W...why do you have Rasetsu here?" _I thought this was a project by the Shinsengumi! _Her foot took a step back, suddenly remembering the vicious nature of these demons.

"Shut up." Maeko's voice lowered. A nervous chill ran up Kira's spine. A sudden flash cut through the air, followed by streamers of blood that dripped onto the wooden floors with quiet '_plop_'s. Her eyes darted to the tear in her yukata sleeve where blood pooled out, bleeding through the thin fabric and trickled down her arm. The warm blood suddenly made the Rasetsu eager. Some licked their lips and their pupils dilated. Kira covered the wound, not feeling the sting until seconds later. She breathed heavily, her eyes filled with the fear of being stabbed, slashed and mutilated by these possessed zombies.

"Now, do you want to behave and stay put, or do you want to be left in the Rasetsu's mercy? I highly doubt they would have any restraint."

"Bloodâ€|" one said throatily. The word immediately got the demons murmured amongst each other, staring eagerly at her bleeding arm.

Kira held back a whimper. She had to hold on. She wanted to wait until the Shinsengumi would show upâ€|if they ever will. "Fine," she murmured. "...what do you want me to do?" Her angry and tired eyes locked with Maeko's. The demoness narrowed her eyes and smirked.

Dear God...what have I gotten myself into?

* * *

><p>:'D it just gets more and more intense! I'm searching for some intense music to help me with all the next chapters orz. Thank you for the reviews for the last chapter, though I left some people freaking outâ€|.just the way I want it evil chuckle :3**

So recap, what she had in the previous chapter was a _dream_! If you guys have any questions, don't hesitate to ask! :)

** AHEM, either way, things will be explained in the next few chapters. And I mean **_**everything**_**! So stay tuned! Don't forget to leave a review, and thanks for reading!**

** -Jen**

16. Deception is Key

Why hello my fellow readers! Back with another update! Yep, once a week! :D so enough talk, let's get back to the story! And thank you for your reviews! You guys rock!

* * *

><p>The Shinsengumi Headquarters had become really busy as the news that a war has sparked with the oni, specifically Maeko. The soldier reported to Hijikata and Kondou in detail of when Kira was snatched by Maeko, how Akina suddenly vanished into thin air as if she never existed in the first place. Alarm rose through the building as the divisions were set up, finally ready to get rid of the demon that had been terrorizing Kyoto over the months.<p>

Though the warriors had no idea what Maeko had in store for them. The divisions headed west of Kyoto according to the demoness' vague directions.

Kondou and Hijikata's men first arrived in the small section of the forest, stumbling upon a battlefield with lifeless bodies scattered across the dirt. What surprised them was that the corpses had snow-white hair.

"Rasetsuâ€|" Hijikata murmured. "How did they end up all the way here?"

"Are you sure none of them escaped Headquarters?" Kondou asked, examining the bodies and bloodstained ground.

"I'm sure." He looked ahead. "It seems Souji and his men went through here...though the blood doesn't seem to be fresh."

Kondou nodded and shouted at his men, "Let's go!"

"Yes!" They shouted and quickly rushed further down the path.

* * *

><p>Okita and his men stood behind a few trees, examining at all the Rasetsu that were outside the mansion. They had been there for a while, since it was basically small army of them scattered across the grassy field. The mansion was in the middle of a forest in a clearing, on a hill.<p>

He had no idea how in the world the demoness obtained such a grand number of these things, and he wasn't going to waltz in and even _try_ to plow through. He wasn't _that_ stupid. He could risk him and his men. He needed reinforcements.

His gaze met the mansion. Narrowing his eyes, he couldn't help but wonder what the hell was going on inside. Was she being tortured? Just...just what was going on?! He couldn't stop thinking about the worst case scenario.

Head were turned as the sound of approaching footsteps emerged from the forest. Okita unsheathed his sword, followed by his men, but immediately felt relieved.

The captains and their men were here. The blue haori filed into the hiding spot. Sheathing his sword, Okita walked up to Kondou and Hijikata. "Heh, I was wondering when you guys would show up."

The rest of the unit captains got into a small group.

"The hell are Rasetsu doing all the way over here?!" Hijikata hissed.

"Hey, how should I know? I was just as surprised as you," Okita responded.

"Okay," Kondou said calmly. "We just need to find that demon and get Kira back. It seems like she's a formidable foe and should not be taken lightly. She managed to get her hands on a large number of them."

"Okita, we can cover you." Heisuke grinned, his eyes filled with determination and excitement.

"We'll tag along with the pipsqueak," Harada said while Shinpachi ruffled Heisuke's hair.

"Oi! This is serious! Kira's in danger!" He exclaimed and smacked the hand away. Okita half-smiled. "Thanks, you guys."

"Heisuke-kun, Harada and Shinpachi will cover us as we get to the mansion. Then we can split up and look for Kira...and if that demon-girl shows up, be careful. We don't know what's in store. But kill her at all costs." Kondou summarized.

Everyone nodded. "Sir," Saito said lowly. "What if we find Kira first?"

"Then get her out of the mansion as fast as you can. It's too dangerous for her to be in this mess."

They all had their orders. Now it was time to put them into action. The three divisions charged out of their hiding spots, swords ready.

In a matter of seconds, demons and human swords clashed and the battle begun. Bodies fell within seconds.

"CHARGE!" Kondou shouted his order. The rest of the groups flooded out of the forest, aiming for those doors. Everyone had a fire burn in their eyes, determined to get to the mansion.

Some of the Rasetsu units were drawn to the larger crowd, aiming their swords at the men. Some soldiers immediately fended off the stray demons, the main group losing only a few of their men in the process.

Okita's face was red, as if exhilarated by the exercise. Reaching the doors, they slammed it open surprisingly with ease...as if they were unlocked on purpose. This is what was lying behind those doors. In

the foyer of the mansion were more and more clusters of Rasetsu, eyes burning red, panting, dying of thirst.

Maeko stood in front of the demons. "I didn't think you would get this far." She giggled, covering her mouth.

"Where the hell is Kira?!" Okita yelled.

She tilted her head, eyes narrowed. "How dare you speak to me that way, trash. You'll be lucky to find her still in one piece." A pause. "Get them." She said apathetically before disappearing.

"What- dammit..." He swore under his breath.

"So many!" Hijikata muttered.

The demons howled and swords clashed once again. Blood splattered everywhere as bodies fell to the ground. Saito ripped through the ongoing waves of demons with one slash per enemy.

"Souji!" Hijikata yelled. "Go upstairs!"

He nodded and started to make a path towards the steps, but he was suddenly stopped when he heard a scream. He glanced over his shoulder, eyes widening.

The leader of the Shinsengumi fell to his knees. The numbers of demons were dwindling as the rest of the soldier flooded the foyer, rushing into the halls and up the stairs. Okita yelled in distress as he cut through the remaining demons that stood in his way to Kondou. His arm and his side was bleeding profusely, droplets of blood plopped onto his haori.

"Kondou-san! Are you okay?" Those damn Rasetsu...why didn't they just bail out on the project? Okita gritted his teeth.

"Souji," Saito said, attending to Kondou, "I will take him to Yamazaki-san. Go find Kira." He went under his good arm and helped him up, earning them a small groan.

"Ahh, I wished I could've helped more," Kondou laughed lightly and tightened his grip on his side wound.

"No, don't say that Kondou-san. You did enough," Okita said and watched as his leader was being helped out of the foyer, littered with corpses. Gripping his swords tightly, Okita spun on his heels and climbed the steps. You could say that the captain was pissed off...at that demon girl and the fact that his leader got injured by those damn Rasetsu. "Tch!" fast-walking down a hall, a couple of those white-haired demons rounded a corner. Before they could even wield their weapons, Okita slashed them down with quiet rage. That cruel side of him was surfacing.

Hearing footsteps, Okita whipped around and pointed his sword at the neck of a short guy- "Heisuke-kun?" His rage slowly simmered.

"Man!" He laughed nervously, "For a second, I thought you were going to really kill me!"

"Tch," he lowered his sword. "Is the outside already clear of

Rasetsu?" He asked dubiously.

"For the most part. Hijikata-san told me to head inside...apparently Kondou-san got injured."

"I know." He sighed and looked around. "C'mon, we need to find her. Some guys went up here before me, so they should've cleaned out most of the halls."

Heisuke nodded. His face was stained with blood, along with his clothes.

The two quickly raced through the halls, yelling out Kira's name. After a few kicked doors, there was still no sign of her. Reaching a pair of stairs at the end of a hall, they raced upstairs. Unlike the halls downstairs, this entire floor was dark...and still. Only the moonlight streamed through the windows.

Keeping their swords out, they walked slowly down the halls. The third floor was pristine...no sign of blood or bodies. _Did the others miss these sets of stairs? _

As they walked, the door a few feet down jumped. Frantic knocks and kicks came from the other side. The unit captains nodded at each other and hurried to the door, which was barricaded on the outside, standing on either side of it.

* * *

><p>Kira woke up in a large room. After she agreed with Maeko...to whatever she just agreed on, she was knocked out and thrown in this room. It was empty except for the decorative scrolls that hung on the walls, and a window showing the back of the mansion.<p>

Her wound wasn't tended to, and when she moved her arm, the dried blood crackled and ribbons of blood streamed down her arm once again. Reaching for the hem of her yukata, she gave it a good tug and a small strip of fabric was in her hands. Struggling to tie the makeshift bandage on her arm, she got up and walked to the window. She could hear screaming...the sound of metals clashing.

_They're here?! _She took in a big breath, trying to calm herself down. Wiping her bloodied hands on her sleeves, she rushed to the door, pulling and pushing it. But this time...it was locked.

She ignored Maeko's earlier threat for not making a move to try to escape. They were _here_, now was the _perfect _time to try to escape. She would stumble across one of the soldiers in no time.

Kicking and knocking the door furiously, she yelled, "Hello?! Anyone there?" Silence. Her hand was burning red as stings trailed up her arm after smacking the door so many times. Kira groaned mentally and was about to sit down-

She heard the sound of...something being lifted on the other side. Her heart leapt as she slammed the door with her shoulder. With no barricade holding the door in place, she fell right through the doors. Her own momentum sent her tumbling to the floor. Kira groaned as she got to her knees.

"Kira?"

That voice... lifting her head up, her eyes widened as she saw Heisuke and Okita towering over her. She had never been so relieved. She scrambled to her feet and was debating whether or not to just throw her arms around the two. "It's about _time_ you got here! God...I'm glad you guys are here." She remarked, hiding her tears.

Heisuke grinned toothily, "It's good to see you too."

Okita's emerald eyes looked over her, immediately spotting the bloodied bandage wrapped around her arm. He reached out for it and Kira stepped away from his grasp. "You're hurt."

"Wha- are you alright?!" asked Heisuke.

"Yeah," she nodded. "It's just a cut."

"Did she hurt you?" He already looked pissed off about something else. When Kira forgot to answer, he answered for her. "She did.."

Kira said quickly, "Can we just get out of here?! That Maeko girl literally appears and disappears within seconds!" _And I don't want to get caught by her again._

"Oh, I'm afraid you're too late for that dear~" Maeko's voice appeared from inside the room. She took light steps forward. "Don't you get it? It's no coincidence that you found these stairs. I _let_ you find it, and her." She giggled.

Okita grabbed Kira by the waist and had her behind him and Heisuke. _He wasn't going to let her get nabbed again._ The two captains pointed their swords at the small demon girl. "Bitch, you planned this all?!" Okita yelled.

Opening her eyes, a smirk curled her lips. "But of course. Hmm~" her gaze shifted over to the shorter one of the two. "But you're not in this part of the game." Unsheathing her katana, she charged at Heisuke.

"Heisuke-kun!" The two yelled as the fight between the demoness and him started. Every blow sent sparks in the air. Maeko's powerful attacks made even Kira's insides rattle, though Heisuke stood his ground. Maeko was quick, but he deflected her blows every time.

"Pretty impressive for a human~" the two swords locked. "But not impressive enough," she smirked before she sent a powerful kick to his chest. He groaned, dropping his sword in the process. Before he could even reach for his wakizashi, Maeko landed a blow on his throat. He reeled back and choked, holding his neck. Falling to his knees, she kicked the side of his face, sending him entirely on the floor, his nose bleeding profusely. "Pathetic," she murmured and kept her foot on his head.

Kira screamed and covered her mouth. Heisuke was going to die if something wasn't done. She saw...she saw that blade being lifted. She

didn't want anyone to die. She wouldn't even know how to react to it. Something lingered at the bottom of her throat and courage shoved it up and out of her. "Stop!"

She turned her head. Heisuke gasped for breath, still coughing. "K-Kira...what are you...wh-what are you doing?!"

"D...don't kill him!" pleaded Kira. "_Please_! He's not...he's not even involved with this! If it's me you want, then go ahead! Just leave him alone!"

Okita stood in front of her, his katana pointed at Maeko. "Over my dead body. I'm not going to let you have her."

Maeko smiled evilly. Kicking away Heisuke's almost-dead body away, she turned and faced the two. "It's okay, I need you for this too...Okita-san."

"D...dammit!" Heisuke tried to get himself up, but to no avail. Exhausted, he fell on the floor.

"You should probably be grateful," Maeko giggled at his position. "Your friend just saved you. Too bad she won't be here to be thanked." Sheathing her sword, she closed her eyes. Light emitted from her hair. Her green locks shifted into a snow-white shade, like someone wiped away dust from furniture. Horns protruded from her forehead as she opened her golden eyes.

And then everything changed. The wooden floors cracked, the walls splintered and twisted like that of tree roots. The roof parted ways to reveal the night sky and the shouts of warriors disappeared in a purple-bluish vapor. Heisuke disappeared with the third floor of the mansion, and Kira could head a howl, was it Heisuke yelling? Or the sound of the Rasetsu?

The wooden floors disappeared out from underneath her, and dirt and leaves took its place. The mild late-summer's breeze grazed her back, wrapped around her legs before going forth. Okita's knees buckled and he dropped his katana. "Okita! Are you alright?" she kneeled next to him, her hands were on his shoulder.

"Dizzy!" he murmured.

Maeko smiled, as if amused. "He's not used to traveling like the oni. You passed out before, remember?"

She glared at her, backing down a bit as she took a longer look at her horns and caramel eyes. "Why do you need him?"

"Please," Maeko laughed, "if you think I'm going to hurt your precious man here, you're wrong. Well, physically anyways."

"Bitch, what are you going to do to Kira?" Okita growled and grabbed his katana, propping himself up.

"Watch your tongue, trash." She hissed. "I can easily rip your head off, as you are in no condition of fighting me, let alone stand up."

"You got us out here...what do you want?" Asked Kira.

The demon only smiled and turned around. Putting her hands together, she slowly pulled them apart. The air in front of her cut, and a hole started to grow, like someone was tearing fabric. The ground started to glow and swirl like that of a whirlpool, and white light emitted from it like a million flashlights were turned on. The sound of wind howled through the trees, racing through the branches and pouring into the swirling vortex in the ground.

"Whatâ€¦" the two murmured.

She turned around. "Do you see, Kira-chan?" Maeko's voice shifted into something sweet. Her white hair shifted into brown, and those golden orbs faded into blue. "Do you finally understand? I planned this all along."

* * *

><p>Ahaaaaaaaa please don't kill me XD I have a plot line to follow and I told myself that I must keep my chapters split so we won't have so many 4000+ words per chapterâ€¦.and that means less chapters as well! If you guys have any questions, please ask! Sorry if this was a bit confusing...was it confusing? It could beâ€¦?

As always, thanks for reading and don't forget to leave your review! I really appreciate it!

~Jen

17. Dance of Swords

I'm tempted to update twice a week..but I want this story to last! Just a few more...and then this ends! I feel like I've come so far...especially after my almost-year long absence. So let's just get started! Thanks for your reviews-getting lots of feedback xD you guys are the best! And I know, Maeko is getting on my nerves too .

* * *

><p>"...Akina?" It was safe to say that she was in too much shock to even freak out.<p>

"No, I am not human. That was my disguise." Akina-Maeko said. She walked around the two slowly out of amusement, as if ready to strike her prey at any moment.

"So...that whole Miho thing was-" Okita started.

"No." She interrupted him. "That was real. Miho did go missingâ€¦" she mused. "I sent her to Kira's time period."

"What?!" exclaimed Kira. "You can do thatâ€¦?"

"Can you really be that stupid? I am an oni. Oni do not have special abilities like opening time rifts. I watched and learned from those magicians...humans who claimed to be sorcerers because I was bored years back. Years later, I collected all my strength to actually do something," she pointed at the portal. By now, she

switched back to her powerful demon form. "Like that. When I learned that there were other worlds...time periods for the oni to conquer...I had to test something...if someone from this time period could safely go through that portal. And that's where you come in."

Kira glared at Maeko. "So this was all about world domination?"

"Hmm...more or less. Why not spread the oni empire to other lands...other worlds!" Her eyes widened with every word, her sinister smile showed off her more protruding canines. "Apparently there are parallel versions of us in different realms. It's true, Miho looked exactly like Kira. I tried to get Miho back so no one would notice her disappearance...but I grabbed you instead."

"So where's Miho?" Okita asked, recollecting himself after the travel.

She shrugged. "She could be dead for all I know. I admit, it was my fault for not keeping a closer eye on her." Her attention was now on Kira. "When I realized it was you who I took back, I tried to go through the portal. But it didn't work. For some reason, I cannot go to your world unless I have you with me."

"So I'm some sort of pass." Kira concluded.

Okita finally stood, albeit shaky. Pointing his katana at Maeko, he glared at her. "Just try to take her away from me."

Maeko laughed. "Is this some kind of joke? It will be so simpleâ€| though she didn't draw her katana. "If you let me leave with her, I won't kill you. But I'm not sure about my Rasetsu."

"_Your_ Rasetsu?" He asked, arching a brow.

"Of course," she said matter-of-factly. "Did you think the Shinsengumi just _happened _to find those papers of how to make the Ochimizu? Of course, that wasn't in my plan originally, I just wanted to mess with you guys and let you build my oni army for me." She giggled. "It just happened to work very nicely into this one. And then I decided to make things interesting, and announced to the rest of the oni clan, that if they would get you and bring you back to me, then they could rule the new world, though...Kazama is such a pathetic demon."

The two stood there, shocked. The thought of one conniving little demon planning this entire scheme out was ridiculous. From bringing her here, to setting up people to kidnap her...everything! "She planned this all along..." Kira murmured to herself.

"From the very beginning." Maeko grinned maliciously. "Did you ever wonder why you could suddenly understand Japanese?"

"You did thatâ€|"

"When I realized the Shinsengumi took you in, I grew bored of you not knowing what in the world everyone was saying, so I added a small spell in your food."

"You were watching me all this timeâ€|?" _She's a grade A stalker.

—

"Yes. I wanted to see what kinds of chaos could be caused. And then we have our wonderful knight in shining armor," Maeko drew her katana and pointed it at Okita. "Once I realized you two had mutual feelings for each other, it just made it better. It's amusing to see humans cry over petty things...like losing a loved one. Now...should I kill you? Or do you want to watch her walk away from you?"

"How about I just kill you and this can all be over?" Okita countered, staring at Maeko.

"My, my, you are stubborn," she sighed. "I guess I have to kill you."

"That's my line!" He roared and dashed towards her. Swords clashed noisily together as each blow landed. Kira remembered the condition Maeko put Heisuke in just a while back. _Not again_. Okita wasn't even in the right condition to fight, as he was still dizzy from traveling like that.

Before Kira could say anything, Maeko had already managed to slip past Okita's sword and slash him across his chest. He groaned as blood started to bleed out onto his clothes.

"Stop it!" cried Kira, to no one in particular.

But they didn't listen. They continued to duke it out. She was tired of being helpless...especially in a world where swords were the main thing. She was immediately regretting not practicing enough with Okita...spending not enough time with him either. Having people save her, even Akina-Maeko saved her from Kazama, but she didn't know if that was staged as well. The feeling of helplessness was overwhelming. Angry tears formed in her eyes as she realized how much more competent she was back home. Back home without all of this magic mumbo-jumbo nonsense.

It's now or never...

Raking up all her courage, she yelled above the chaos, "STOP IT!"

Everything went still. The two ceased attacking and looked at Kira. "Iâ€|" Kira clenched her fists, frustrated. "I'll go with Maeko...justâ€|" she looked at the demon. "Don't hurt him even more. Don't hurt or kill anyone of the Shinsengumi!"

"Kira, what are you doing?!" Okita yelled.

Maeko smirked. "She's being sensible."

Taking in a breath, she started to walk towards the portal. Okita dashed up to her, regardless of his injury. "Are you crazy? Your people probably don't have the right weapons to fight off an _army_ of those things!" He grabbed her arm tightly and pulled her back. He wasn't going to lose her _again_.

"Ow...you're hurting me!" He grabbed onto her injured arm, though he still held on. It took Kira a great amount of strength to rip her arm

away from him. "I don't want you to get hurt!"

"Hmm...how cute, a lover's quarrel." Maeko giggled, followed by a frown. "Enough of this, otherwise I'll just grab you by the hair and I'll decapitate him. Orâ€¦ I can just send my army to go wipe out all the citizens of Kyoto...maybe the rest of Japan."

Okita ignored the threat. "If you leave with her, there's no promise that the Rasetsu might stay back and terrorize Kyoto...or worse! You'll be endangering two worlds instead of one."

Kira shoved away the logic...to be honest, the girl had no idea what she was doing now. Was she really being selfish? Endangering both worlds just for the sake of Okita and the people she met here?

"Kiraâ€¦!" Okita pressed.

"Iâ€¦I don't know anymore! If Maeko keeps on making more Rasetsu, you won't be able to hold them off forever! We have more advanced weapons back home!"

"Are you doubting our strength? Kira, you've seen our men! They stormed this mansion that was _swarmed_ with Rasetsu."

"But-"

"Do you really want to go home?" He asked.

She couldn't bring herself to say anything anymore. Too frustrated...angry...confused. His face hardened. "I see."

Maeko remained silent, though the smile on her face seemed to be showing enjoyment out of this.

Tossing his katana on the ground in front of Kira, he unsheathed his wakizashi. She tensed up, looking at him curiously. "W...what are you doing?"

"Pick it up. If you want to leave with her...you have to kill me." He said coldly.

"This isn't going to help anything! Are you crazy?!" She exclaimed. He was already injured...and she didn't want to hurt him...or hurt herself. She knew what he was capable of, and it looked like he wasn't joking. He pointed the short sword at her. "Pick it up, or I won't give you a chance to live."

_He's bluffing...not he's not...yes he is! _Voice swirled in her head, leading her one way and then spinning her around and sending her in another. She stared at the katana, taking in a few breaths. Picking it up, her hands started to shake, feeling something really bad run through her spine. "...Okitaâ€¦!"

"Do you still want to go back?" He asked, his emerald eyes drilled holes into hers.

A strangled 'yes' left her mouth. She was terrified. Let's say she never made these kind of choices that actually affected human life.

He looked at her, as if hurt. He took in a breath as his eyes softened for only a split second before turning into an icy gaze. Okita then swung. Kira yelped and held the katana close to her body, all of her little knowledge on how to fight with a sword going down the drain. She felt the breeze from the wakizashi on her face.

He was serious.

"Are you pretending to play dumb with a sword? Or do you not really want to go?" He asked coldly as he lunged towards her.

Kira dodged, pointing the blade towards him. His clothes were soaked in blood by now. "Okita! You're bleeding!"

"That's not going to stop me." He slowly circled around her before charging at her. Their swords clashed only for a minute, as Kira jumped back, missing his blade by a few inches. And thus the dance of swords had begun.

This all felt wrong. She didn't want to do this. It was like fighting against a family member to the death, none of them wanted this. For a moment...she wanted to drop the katana and just hug him, break down and sob...but she would be cut down before she could even get close to him. She was afraid of getting themselves both hurt out of her clumsiness...or Maeko getting bored and just finishing the job herself.

Tears welled up once again.

"I don't want to hurt you!" she cried.

His eyes widened, as if insulted by the very words. "_Hurt _me? For God's sake, you're fucking ripping my heart out!" He laughed dryly. "I'm already hurt here too," he pointed at his bleeding clothes. He took a powerful swing at her, and she jumped with a surprised noise. "The only person I cared about," he said, taking a swing with each phrase. The edge of her sword missing and colliding with his sword. "The only person I let in...is leaving after everything?!" Kira took a step back with each blow he delivered.

What was he saying now?! Venting for sure, but it sounded more like a confession than anything.

She cried out as their swords clashed with a harsh rasp of metal. Her arms were shaking, cowering against his strength and rage. Her hands stung, begging to let go of the sword, but she still held on. "Please-" she begged, tears streaming down her face.

He wasn't going to hear it. "You're pretty cruel," his smile was still there. Over the time they spent, she forgot the darker side of him. Sadistic, cruel, sly. "You just come in here and steal away my heart. And you don't even know what to do with it instead of crushing it, and handing it back."

Maeko's laughter filled the air. "Maybe I don't need to do anything. You two will just kill each other!"

Kira did her best to block out the rest of Maeko's presence. "Stop it! I...I just want to stop this and go home!" Half of his words only

sunk in. She was filled with fear and her mind shoved out everything else.

"_Go home_? What do you have there?" He asked curtly.

"Friends and family-people I've grown up for years!" She tried not to choke on the words.

"Tch, don't fool me. According to what you said, it wasn't anything spectacular! There was nothing that stood out in that world!" She could hear the desperate plea in his argument. "You lived a boring life going through the same routines!"

"I had my future ahead of me!" Kira collected all of the things...all the thoughts she had about her future, going to a college, getting her degree and pursuing some career.

Their swords clashed again. Their faces were divided by the crossing swords. "What if I wanted my future with you?! Dammit Kira, get it through that thick skull of yours! I love you."

"Whatâ€|" the sword's retracted, and then hers was abruptly knocked out of her hands. The metal clattered loudly on the floor. Kira's shaking hands were stinging and her heart dropped down to her stomach, realizing what was next.

"But if you don't want me...then I guess I have no choice..." he said. Tears streamed down her face like cascading waterfalls. Eyes blurry with tears, she closed them. "I've been ten sorts of a fool."

She heard it. Heard the tear of skin from that blade.

Kira waited for that final strike, but it never came. She heard a surprised noise, not a scream. She opened her eyes to find Maeko standing a few feet behind her with Okita's blade through her slim body. Her heart specifically. "Rot... in hell...bitch," Okita growled as he pulled back and let the blood splatter like paint. Maeko's blood acted as an abstract picture painted on her golden yukata.

Kira let out a breath she had been holding over the seconds and covered her mouth, shaking and crying hysterically. Maeko's small body crumpled on the ground, her face looking up at the two. "I underestimated youâ€|" the rage and sadistic look in her eyes faded along with her life. "I thought you were really...going to kill herâ€|"

The two just looked down at her. The demoness' breath was getting shallow. "Damn youâ€|" and with those final words, the pureblood demon stopped breathing. Her eyes remained open as blood continued to pool out onto the forest floor.

It was silent for a moment. Kira covered her eyes with her dirtied sleeves, still sobbing out of fear and relief. "Oh my Godâ€|that-I thought you were going to kill me for real!" She yelled. That dream was real...and this was the ending.

Okita was still silent. Walking over to the katana, he picked it up and gave it to Kira. "I had the option of killing you there...but she

was driving me nuts with her obnoxious laughter. Do you still want to leave? You know I won't hesitate to kill you."

She shook her head, afraid that the nightmare would come back to life. "But...didn't you say you loved me?! Why...why would you kill someone you loved?!"

"So I can move on, knowing that there would be no possible way to try to find them. So I would know what had happened to them instead of worrying my head off all day, wondering if she was still alive...still healthy," his voice grew soft. Kira didn't take the sword. Okita took a step closer to her...closer...closer...until they were standing toe-to-toe. "So she wouldn't fall for someone else...forgetting me."

Kira sniffed and hiccuped. Her bottled up tears over the months started to flow out. "I...I would never forget you!" she choked on her words. "I wouldn't forget any of this."

"I wouldn't forget you either...and that's my problem." He murmured. He couldn't bear to lose her...not when he just poured his heart out. That teasing evolved into something else, and it wasn't because of Maeko. At least to himself, and Kira, he would admit that he has feeling for her. That foreign girl who fell out of the sky and started new adventures for the Shinsengumi to go on. That girl who didn't know customs and had to be taught, much to his amusement...how she wasn't reserved and boring like all the other girls.

Okita dropped his swords and took her hands off of her face. "I haven't felt like this before!"

She sniffled as her tears dripped down, soaking her yukata. "O-Okita!" she couldn't bring herself to say anything. The trauma she just went through was petrifying.

"I'm sorry," he said lowly. "I scared you!" he laughed sadly. "I'm such an idiot. But please...stay with me."

"Y-you...y-you're such...a d-dumbass." A small smile curled her lip at the word, but the tears kept flowing.

Okita chuckled. "That's the Kira I know." He brought her body close to his and wrapped his arms around her. Despite the fact that she was pressing up against his wound, he continued to hold her.

Kira didn't seem to mind, as she continued to sob, her tears staining his already dirty clothes. But just within a few seconds, her crying ceased and only sniffles remained. She felt safe in his arms...despite the show that was displayed moments ago.

"Please stay...I need you."

* * *

><p>Fluuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuufff! Thank you for your reviews! And sorry if I kinda toyed with people's hearts right here-it was pretty dramatic if I do say so myself.

**Goodbye Maeko . oh my god it was so nice to kill her! So RECAP,

Maeko is the mastermind who started this all, pulling Kira into this world, albeit by accident, and decided to play along to see what would happen. Maeko disguised herself as Akina to get closer to Kira and just mess with her even more! And she's the reason why Kazama was after her.**

**Yep...Maeko is such a sadist. AND NOW SHE'S DEAD **

**;D until next time my fellow readers! **

~Jen

18. Choice

**We are almost done you guys! :D First off, I would like to thank you guys for the sudden influx of reviews! Like- OH MY GOD you guys! You are the best (I know I said it before but it's true) You guys really inspire me and just make my days even better! **

Honestly, when I look back at the earlier chapters, I cringe...oh my god they're so bad = . = I'm redoing them occasionally when I get the chance. But it's so HARD to look that them, like what in the world was I thinking?! XD

Anyways, enjoy the chapter!

* * *

><p>She couldn't believe what was happening. Maeko was dead, Okita saved her...and nearly killed her, and they were still alive. Both of them. And now she had Okita begging for her to stay.<p>

"You know...you're pretty crazy." Kira said. "But that's okayâ€|"

"C'mon Kira," he chuckled. "I need a 'yes' or a 'no'."

"Okita, I-"

Her words were cut off. The sound of running emerged from the shadows of the trees. The insane laughter started once again. _No...! No, no, no, no! _Rasetsu leered at them, licking their lips at the overwhelming scent of blood.

"Damn, we just can't have a moment of peace." He murmured. Kira glanced at the swords on the ground and at the number of demons surrounding them. The portal behind them was closing, due to its creator on the floor, lifeless.

"We need to get out of hereâ€|" Kira said.

"Don't worry, I can take them."

"You're _injured_. Any more cuts like that and...bad things, Okita! Bad things!" She tugged at his hands, trying to find an escape.

And then there was a screech. One demon ran up to them, holding out his bloodied sword. Kira screamed at Okita, but he didn't listen. He didn't have time to grab the swords without one of them being

slashed. Instead, he wrapped his arms around her tightly and put his back to the Rasetsu.

"Okita! Okita, what are you doing?!" She screamed frantically, trying to break free. But before Kira could scream any louder, the demon slashed his sword along Okita's back. His blood staining his blue haori. Okita groaned and held onto her tightly. Another slash...and then another. "Okita! What the hell are you doing?! We...we can get out of here!" She said hysterically. And that's when the rest of the Rasetsu ran in and joined the fun.

"Fine...run...I'll keep them distracted" he said lowly.

"What's the point in staying with you if you die!?" She screamed as his body grew limp from the blood loss. His forehead was resting on her shoulders and his arms loosened around her.

She held him up from under the shoulders, trying to keep him awake, screaming, yelling...she was about to cry again and she knew it. Maeko's body was swarmed by the Rasetsu, her blood attracting them like moths. But that one Rasetsu who insisted on slashing Okita then looked at Kira. "Give me...your blood!" He cackled and swiped his sword at them. Okita managed to stand again, only to get the sword pierced in his side. Okita widened his eyes as the sword was pulled back. His blood splattered on Kira's clothes, making her scream. "OKITA!" It was like her world was shattering that second, and her heart sunk down to her stomach.

He grunted and held his side, falling to his knees. She fell down with him, with one arm around his shoulder with her hand suddenly clinging onto his. This wasn't fair. Tears streamed down her face as her throat constricted. Hiccuping, she placed his hand on her cheek and continued to sob. Why now?! He could die right now! What point would there be if he died now? "Why...why...why would you do that f-for me?" Her voice cracked.

"Kira" he said softly. "C'mon...it's just a scratch." He assured.

He was running out of breath as she picked up one of the swords. "Kira wait" Tears streamed down her face, mingling with the blood that stained her cheeks. Gripping the sword, she yelled at the Rasetsu, "DON'T TOUCH HIM!" She got up on her feet to face it.

Blindly taking swings at the demon, rage coursed through her veins, all fear was flushed out of her and all there was was anger. That smirk annoyed the hell out of her, and those laughs reminded her of hyenas. Damn annoying.

Finding an opening, she thrust the sword in the Rasetsu's stomach, pulling it out and then slashing at its neck. Blood gushed out everywhere, covering them in the crimson paint.

She heard another scream from behind her, whipping around she saw another Rasetsu charging at her, attracted by the blood that kept on spilling. She held up her sword, ready to face him until someone else appeared right in front of her.

Kazama stood in front, his sword already impaled through the demon's

body at the heart. Tearing his katana away, the body crumpled to the ground. "Save your energy for later. Get your trash out of here." He pointed to Okita, struggling to stand.

It took her a while to faze out of her blind fury. She nodded at Kazama, silently thanking him and wondering...was he here this whole time? And why was he helping her? Rushing over to Okita, she took one arm and had it around her shoulder. "Ugh...c'mon, stay with me here!" She said to him.

He chuckled, his body shaking as he tried to stand so he wouldn't crush Kira. "Maybe you should get angrier more...you're better using the sword."

She rolled her eyes, heart pounding as adrenaline rushed through her. "Now is not the time to joke. We need to get backâ€|" the two started to walk slowly. In between two trees, she could see the mansion not so far away.

"We need to find Yamazaki," Okita panted as he held his wound. Kira glanced over her shoulder, watching as Kazama picked off the demons one by one. Some even backed away, realizing who they were dealing with. Putting her attention back to the mansion, she did her best not to trip over roots...or anything else. She hoped that rumor of dancers being clumsy while not dancing was fake.

Still holding the sword, she used it as a walking stick as the two limped away from the forest. "Hnnnâ€|" he groaned and dipped his head.

"No, no, no, no," she said quickly and nudged his head up with her shoulder, "you are not going to sleep." Her eyes were puffy and she sniffled.

"You suck...at being a nurseâ€|" he said, a smile shone through those words, albeit it was weak.

"I never paid attention this this kind of stuff! Obviously I wasn't going to leave you there and get cut into pieces by those things!"

"Could of...at least wrapped the woundâ€|"

She knew that he was frustrating her on purpose. "I panicked!" Talking helped him stay awake...but it was a struggle for her. Her throat burned from all the screaming, and now she was supporting him, messing with her breathing.

"You... should get some tips from... Yamazaki on how...to tend the woundedâ€|" he said breathlessly.

"Just...promise me you'll stay awake when I find Yamazaki." She readjusted her grip on his arm and carried most of his weight, as his legs started to slow and his body growing limp with each second.

I'm useless...againâ€| she sighed mentally and gave herself a good slap to the brain. Focus! _

As they entered the grassy field, Kira could see the corpses

littering the ground. Blood puddles blossomed like flowers on the grass and it reeked of death with a mix of a summer night breeze. "Okita?"

"Mmmâ€¦!"

"Stay awake!" She strained her self as her lungs struggled to breathe properly. This guy was too heavy.

"Mmmmâ€¦!"

"You gotta say more than just 'mmm'! Say anything! We're almost thereâ€¦!" she scrunched up her nose at the overwhelming stench of blood. It almost smelled like a funeral home, death and roses.

Limping up to the open doors, the foyer was covered in blood, but the Rasetsu corpses had vanished, now Shinsengumi members stood around, waiting for orders. The couple were exhausted, Kira yelling out a breathy yell, "I need help! Okita's injured!"

They all turned heads and that's when all of her strength shot down. She groaned as she fell on her knees, still holding onto Okita. "Don't worry...we're here...you'll be alright." She tried to smile, but she couldn't hear him...feel his breathing...or hear his heartbeat. She froze. "...Okitaâ€¦?" Her voice was barely above a whisper.

The members rushed to her and took Okita from her arms, shouting orders to go find Yamazaki. It was like her heart skipped a beat...maybe more. She scrambled to her feet, almost falling over from getting up too quickly, but was held up by someone. She looked up to see Shinpachi. He too was covered in blood, though it didn't seem he was struck.

"Careful, Kira-chan! Boy, we missed you..." He said, grinning. Obviously he was trying to make her feel better, but it didn't.

"O-Okita...h-heâ€¦!"

"Don't worry, he'll be fine! You know Yamazaki's the best here."

Kira wriggled away from his grasp and started to follow where Okita had been taken. "I...I need to see if he's okay!"

"Hey! Careful! You're as pale as a ghost," he hurried up to her and tried to support her as she rested on the wall.

She nodded. "Yeah, I know..." She was dead tired, out of breath, but she needed to see how he was doing. "W...what about Heisuke?"

Shinpachi helped her along the way to the makeshift emergency room. "Ahh," he paused. "He's fine, though pissed off that a girl beat the snot out of him." He chuckled and opened the door.

Wounded soldiers were on futons, probably found in the room. Light flooded her eyes, making her squint. Yamazaki and a couple others

swarmed around Okita's bloodied body. Doctor Matsumoto was treating other injured warriors as well. She hurried to Okita, kneeling beside him. They stripped him of his clothes, and she could see his chest covered in blood, while more crimson continued to seep out of his side.

He finally opened his eyes. "Hhhh...Kira!" he said weakly.

"You're awake!" Probably not for long though, he was losing too much blood.

Okita's mouth twitched into a small grimace as Yamazaki cleaned the wounds. "You're...a mess." He chuckled.

"I know!" Kira shook her head. Though she didn't realize by how much until she spotted crimson stains...all over her yukata. Bloody handprints were on her sides and the bottom of her yukata was ripped because of her makeshift bandage. No doubt her face would have blood stains and cringed at the thought of possibly licking her lips and tasting someone else's blood...ugh, sick! "But you're a bigger mess." She took a good look at him...he looked horrible, and the thought of it just made her eyes glassy with tears again.

"Ahh...he's losing too much blood. I'll need to cauterize it so I can put the bandages on." Yamazaki cursed under his breath and rifled through a bag full of tools.

Okita wasn't scared about that, but he wasn't sure if that would settle well with Kira. He knew that she didn't grow up surrounded by all of this. The girl slaughtered for the first time and she's drenched in blood for goodness sake! He looked at her, giving her a soft smile though the gleam in his emerald eyes was fading slowly.

Kira stared at Okita, "You're alright with this?" She heard about this in history class so many times...people would use a hot iron to close wounds...the thought of burning flesh made her stomach churn.

"It's fine. You want me to live...don't you?"

"Of course I do," she said, scoffing.

With the help of another member, Yamazaki got the flame started and managed to heat up the iron. Holding up the red-tipped rod, he looked at Okita. "Ready?"

Shinpachi and Hijikata held Okita down while Kira just sat there, her hand managed to snake into his. Okita nodded, gripping her hand tightly.

Seconds later, Yamazaki pressed the iron to his wound. The sizzle from burning flesh made Kira cringe. Okita grimaced as his body twitched. "Easy there...ugh...! Damn!" he groaned and squeezed her hand. She wondered if he was going to cut off the circulation to her fingers.

Though there was something wrong with Okita. His painful expression were slowly ebbing away. "Okita!? Hey! Stay awake!" Kira said

frantically, squeezing his hand.

"He's losing a lot of blood! We need to hurry up!" Yamazaki said urgently.

Okita could hear people around him chatter, sounding more like panicked tones but things started to get fuzzy. The searing pain on his wounds were fading and he started to lose feeling of Kira holding his hand. His body was numb and his heart was beating faster..and then slower. His breathing was spaced out with longer delays within the minute.

"Hang in there, Souji," Hijikata said.

* * *

><p>Cliff hanger I guess? ;D I've split this chapter and the next because it was so long! Sorry about that ;) guess you'll just have to find out what happens in the next chapter! Thank you for your reviews/follows/favorites! We're just about to wrap up this story! The home stretch!**

~Jen

19. Reflection

I split this in two chapters because it was so long! Eight pages! Sorry if I just tugged on some more heart strings-the chapter just happened to split there! Honest! Please enjoy the chapter!

* * *

><p>It had been a couple hours, and his wounds had been closed and patched up. His torso was wrapped in bandages, covered by the sweat from all the stress that was put on his body. By now, Okita was safely sleeping, he was near death earlier during the process. After the cauterization was complete, they noticed Kira's poor bandaged arm and immediately got that fixed. She was just glad it wasn't infected. And she was even more glad knowing that he was going to be okay. The hard part was over, finally.<p>

The Shinsengumi had gotten all of their wounded together and hefted them off back to Headquarters, each warrior beaten down from the intense fight. Kira kept walking next to him, still looking at his sleeping face. He seemed at peace for once.

The journey home was unbearably long, according to her legs. Even her strong dancer legs were exhausted after walking for so many hours. It was near daybreak by the time they got to Headquarters. Okita was transferred back to his room, because all he needed was rest due to the blood loss.

As much as she wanted to stay next to Okita, her body was telling her otherwise, as she reeked of blood and was just a mess in general.

Stepping inside the bathroom, she looked at a mirror. What she saw wasn't her own image. A girl covered in blood wasn't the old Kira, the girl from modern America. Her cheeks were stained with blood, as

well as her clothes. She could see where she wiped her bloodied hands and where it smeared. Okita was right, she was a mess.

She wasn't the girl who cowered at the sight of blood or shook when she held a sword. The only thing that was familiar to her were her eyes, but even those had hardened. Or it could be just the lack of sleep.

Kira stepped away from her reflection and quickly got out of her ruined clothes. Scrubbing herself down, she finally got in the tub and sat in there for a good fifteen minutes.

The Shinsengumi Headquarters had never been so quiet. It was like as if it was vacant. It reminded her of a Sunday morning...when she would wake up super early on accident since she had classes in the morning.

Quickly getting dressed, she headed to Okita's room, nearly plowing over Saito who was carrying a tray of food. "Oh-sorry about that."

"It's fine." He said. Looking at Kira and then at the door, he added, "You want to see him. It would be good if he rested first."

She tried to not look disappointed and simply nodded.

"Here," he offered her the tray. In all honesty, he seemed pretty tired as well. "You can give this to him."

Holding the tray, she smiled, "Thanks. You should get some rest too. I'll probably crash in the next couple hours." True, she was more energetic than usual. It would be only a matter of time before her knees buckle and just sleeps wherever she fell.

He nodded and silently walked past her.

Sliding the door open, she walked inside to see Doctor Matsumoto tending to Okita's bandages, making sure he was stable. He looked up, giving her a tired smile. "I'm assuming that's not for me," he chuckled. He checked Okita's pulse before setting his wrist down, putting his things in his bag.

"Sorry," she smiled.

"Ah, it's no problem."

"How is he doing?"

"He just needs to sleep and try not to get out of bed so quickly. Those wounds on his front and back need to heal before he can jump into another battle," he stood. "You did a good job getting him to Yamazaki-kun. He must've been heavy to carry." He chuckled. "You should rest too when you get a chance."

"Just a little bit," she said. "Don't we all."

"There's no rest for me, I need to go check on some others before I can relax," he opened the door. "I guess you can take care of him from here." And then he left.

Her eyes trailed back to the sleeping samurai, and then at his torso. Those bandages didn't hide his define muscles-Kira! Stop that!

-

She shook her head and sat next to him, setting the tray right beside her. She wanted to hold his hand...touch his shoulder...but was afraid of breaking him even though he was in a stable condition.

Okita's eyes opened slowly and he tilted his head at her. "You're...pretty weird...just watching a man sleep."

She jumped and crossed her arms. "I just-I brought you food! I thought you were still sleeping!" Despite her complaints, in between those lines she was glad he was awake, now she knew completely that he wasn't dead.

He shook his head. "I woke up... when Doctor Matsumoto got here."

"You've been pretending to sleep all this time." She finished for him.

Okita winked. "I thought you were going to talk to yourself... while you watched me sleep. I was waiting for itâ€|" His smile was tired but it felt warm.

"Sorry to burst your bubble." She paused. "Do you want to eat?"

"Nah, I'll wait. I just wanna talk with youâ€|so...I guess you'll be staying here forever, huh?"

"Well, I kinda chopped down a Rasetsu and hauled you over to Yamazaki. Do you know how heavy you are?" She gave his shoulder a light smack. Her memories flashed back to those gruesome scenes. She sniffled and tears welled up. "God..you nearly died," she said, her voice weakening.

"Hmm," he slowly sat up, groaning because of her sore muscles refusing to listen. He ignored Kira's protests and looked at her. "Shh...you don't need to bring that up again, don't cry," he said gently. "I'm back in one piece." He grinned and wiped a stray tear with his thumb.

She swallowed her lingering cries and nodded slowly. He was right. She didn't need to linger. "So...so what now?"

"Well," he chuckled. "You can give me a 'yes' or a 'no' to my confession."

Kira widened her eyes and leaned back, fighting down the blush. "W-wha-that was a confession?" Her heart was immediately sent down in a frenzy of beats.

"Does, 'I love you' not count?" He leaned closer to her, his emerald eyes were too intense. Look away, look away, look away!

"Y-you were trying to kill me in the process!" She countered. Honestly, the guy wasn't even teasing her. It was just a question and

Kira was already blushing red like a tomato.

He sighed, followed by a smile. "Fine, you're so stubborn sometimes." His hands intertwined with hers and their heads were close. She could feel his breath mingle with hers as he spoke. "What if...I had a crush on you...but what if it turned into something more?" He paused. "How would you feel if I told you that I love you?"

How in the world could she respond to this? She built up a defense against a teasing Okita, not a genuine one. "I...I would probably feel the sameâ€|"

"Probably?" He arched a brow and chuckled. "So then...if the feeling is mutual, shouldn't we be a couple?"

"...probablyâ€|"

"Good. Was that better?" He murmured lowly.

All she did was nod. He smiled lightly. "Hnn...maybe I should get hurt more oftenâ€| you pay more attention to me," he chuckled.

"Don't even joke about that!" She thumped his head. "I was worried about you! Freaking gave me two heart attacks!"

"Hey, don't hurt me even more." He said softly. "You nearly killed me when you said you wanted to leave."

She shook her head. "Don't bring that upâ€|" slowly, she leaned in, letting her lips brush on his. He let out a groan and she just smiled, finally kissing him. Her heart leapt and spun around, he felt like her world all over again. His lips were soft and warm, and this time she actually knew what in the world was going on. During those few seconds, her shields went down.

She pulled away, but he came back and gave her light peck. Okita brought his hand to her face, brushing some of her hair away from her face. "I was supposed to make the first move," he smiled.

She matched his grin, not even trying to hide her blushing face. "You did that the last time. I was just...evening it out."

"From what I remembered, you didn't even react to thatâ€|"

"I didn't know that you were serious!"

"Idiot," he rolled his eyes as he patted her cheek. "Usually when a guy gives you a kiss, it means he isn't joking...usually."

"Well you kept on joking with me earlier, so how was I sure that that wasn't another one?"

He paused. "True."

"You need to rest, mister." She said suddenly, removing her hands from his.

"Aww, you're no fun-" but Kira wasn't going to have it. Pushing him back gently, she said, "Just get some sleep. You got slashed...how

many times?" She arched her brow.

"Fine, fine," he sighed, "you need to sleep too."

"Yeah, I know." Kira started to get up, but grabbed her arm.
"What?"

"You're _leaving_?" He asked.

"Yeah...so I can sleep in my room," she said matter-of-factly. And then realized what he meant. "And that's where I draw the line.
Nope."

He tilted his head. "Oh come _on_, I'm not like those drunkards at Shimabara. I won't do anything."

She forced the words out of her, "I know that! Just...I won't be able to sleep! Have you ever had someone breathe on your neck for hours on end? Besides, what if someone comes in?"

"Who cares? We all had a long night-you're making excuses." He smirked once again. "Are you really that embarrassed about that? I thought we were together now," he pouted.

Kira drew in a quick breath and took her arm back. "Go to sleep!" And with that, she strutted out of the room, closing the door behind her. She could hear him chuckle and she covered her cheeks. _Ohhhh my God...why do I have a feeling that we're back at square one againâ€¦|?_

For a moment, she just stood there. To think, a few months ago, she was back home dancing her legs off...now she was here in Japan. Demons, swords, magic-it all sounded like something that came from a book. Not to mention she was apparently dating a was a story to tell her friends, if she ever did go back. But...she smiled to herself...she didn't want to go back now. Call her selfish, whatever, she was here now and was enjoying it all, despite life threatening events, but that was all behind her.

If she could, she would want to see her parents for the last time. She looked up at the sky, wondering what they were doing at this moment? Mourning her death? Acting like she never existed? What?

She sighed and started to head back to her room. Flopping onto the futon, she dug herself in the blankets and shut her eyes, succumbing to the spell of sleep.

* * *

><p>It's not over yet folks! Ahhh, but it really feels like it-thank you for your reviews! :D Just as always, I'll be back with another update, next week. Sorry if this was a shorter chapter!

~Jen

20. Epilogue: Home

** Yep, you've read right! This is the epilogue! BUT! It's not over!

Just ****_**one**_**** more left! Not going to tell you guys much about it because I'm going to keep it hush hush until next week! :3**

* * *

><p>There was always something that would kick in Okita in the head, like when he tried to confess to her...twice. He tried so many times of just hinting that he wanted to marry her, but she would never get it. Hey, it was all the more to keep on trying, he wasn't going to give up even if it would take him forever.<p>

It was two years, since all of this startedâ€¦ the Shinsengumi halted the project with the Ochimizu while the rest of the Raesetsu Makeo had captured were being hunted and eliminated. Kira and Okita walked hand in hand along the quiet river where they danced on Obon. Things were peaceful and some of the guys kept on complaining that there was nothing to do, but not Kira. She had someone.

"Two years," Okita sighed.

"It just felt like yesterday," she said, squeezing his hand. She hadn't danced in a while, but only waltzed now with Okita. Her teacher would've had a fit if she found out that she stopped dancing, but she had no idea Kira was here anyways. "So why did you bring me out here? We went out so many times over the past few days."

He smiled and let out a loud groan. "You still don't get it?" He grimaced. "And I thought the girls at Kyoto were slow-or maybe not...when do you get married back home?"
>She blinked. "Uh...it depends, mid to late twenties? Sometimes people marry at 30 or later, it just depends when they fall in love I guess. Why do you ask?"<p>

Okita stopped walking and slouched his shoulders. "Sometimes I just wonder if I should be blunt with this," he muttered.

"Be blunt with what? Okita!" She nudged his arm. "What's wrong?"

"Nothing!"

"Yeah," she arched a brow. "_Suure_. Just tell me!"

"Then it won't be as romantic," he sighed as he walked in front of her, turning around to face her. "Kira," his face softened. "You sure you're not being air headed on purpose?"

"Is that some kind of joke?"

"No, and this isn't one either," he said and got down on one knee. _Then_, the gears started to turn in her head, sparks went off as things started to make sense. Her heart sped up as she covered her mouth. "I-is thisâ€¦"

"Will...you marry me?" He asked, holding her hand, smiling up at her. He never thought that this one girl could give him all the happiness in the world, not to mention some of the struggles. It was hard to get through to her, but he was sure Kira was in the same position.

"Oh my God," she started to fan herself, letting out tears. He was proposing to her?! All this time?! How did she not see that? Was she really that stupid?!

"I need an answer," his voice brought her back down to earth, but she couldn't respond with words. Making a teary smile, she clung onto him, giving him a kiss. "Yes," she nodded with her hands on both sides of his face. "Yes!"

All he did was grin and brought her in for another kiss. Standing up, he wrapped his arms around her and lifted her into the air, spinning her around before setting her down. "What took you so long to figure that out?" He asked, wiping her tears away.

"I don't know-just...shut up," she said, hugging him tightly. She clung to him, her hands gripping his shirt. She didn't want to let go, not now, not ever.

* * *

><p>The wedding happened a few weeks months. Kira's self-image of wearing a wedding dress was replaced by a white wedding kimono that seemed like it would weigh a ton. It would be so much easier to slip into a dress than to put on layer after layer of fabric.<p>

The girls helping her giggled at the fact that Kira had no idea how to help herself. Just when she started to understand things here, she was brought into another bit of foreign territory; marriage here. Her hair was done up and had some intricate headpiece and her makeup was done for her. Ohh...the makeup. She looked into the mirror and was pale as a ghost! She nearly screamed when she saw her reflection, but she kept on the pale makeup since the girls gave her even more and more compliments.

Just for the day. More than ever, she wanted to see her husband-to-be. It had been a few hours and she was itching to see him.

The ceremony started in a blur, though it was as if the world stood still as she and Okita kept gazing at each other, murmuring soft things.

When Okita saw her, he was blown away. The wedding kimono, the hair, even the makeup...he could still see Kira despite looking a lot more Japanese. Her eyes had that same glow, and so did that smile-don't get him wrong, he thought she looked beautiful with all the stuff on, but she was better when she wore her regular attire.

He was dressed in a formal kimono, ten times simpler than her garb. She was like a walking painting with all of these intricate details. And then there was Okita. She didn't complain though.

Her friends were there, lingering around the couple. They were all dressed nicely, much to Harada and Shimpachi's dismay that the kimonos were too constrictive.

"Wow," he murmured as he looked at her up and down. "I like you better with all of these things gone, but you're still beautiful," he said, giving her a smile.

The pale makeup covered her blush. "...thanks. You look rather dashing," she scoffed, followed by a little smirk. "But you usually do, sooâ€|"

"Thank you, I try." He chuckled.

Heisuke prodded into the conversation. "Ehh, but Kira-chan looks so different! I almost couldn't recognize you!"

She stared at him, furrowing her brows. "Yeah, doesn't suit me, huh?"

He panicked, "No! I didn't say that! Uhh...you look very pretty! Ah-that's no good eitherâ€|" Harada grabbed the back of Heisuke's kimono and dragged him back. "Okay, Heisuke, just leave the couple alone before you regret it." He laughed.

"Ow! Easy!" Heisuke exclaimed as he swatted at Harada's hands.

Kira gave Harada the thumbs up and turned back to Okita. "Ignoring that...can you say those words again?"

He chuckled and held onto her hands. "But I already said it so much today."

"Just one more time?" She pouted. "Just to reassure myself that it's actually happening."

"Fine," he mused. Getting close to her, enough so that their breaths mingled, he spoke barely above a whisper, "We're getting married today."

* * *

><p>Followed by the ceremony was the party, most of the citizens of Kyoto were there, to thank the Shinsengumi for protecting the city and to congratulate the new couple. The party went well into the night and Kira was beyond tired. Too many people if you'd ask her.<p>

"Ahh, Souji!" A drunk Shinpachi sauntered up to him. "Good luck for tonight, yeah?" He grinned stupidly and Okita rolled his eyes and shoved him back to his band of drunkard friends. Kira had already gone ahead, complaining that she wanted to get rid of all the makeup and whatnot.

Chatting with the last person who was near him, he slipped out of the room as the place started to get roaring drunk.

Finding her in the room, he watched as she was struggling to find the pins in her hair. Kira turned at the sound of the door opening and closing. "Oh, heyâ€|"

"Need some help?" He chuckled and walked over to her.

Her arms went down to her sides, murmuring a defeated, "Yes." He smile and went to work, getting rid of the various hair accessories. Damn, why did they need to use so many pins? He accidentally tugged her hair the wrong way, and she flinched. "Ow! Carefulâ€|"

"Sorry, sorry," he apologized as he finally let all her hair down. Wrapping his arms around her, he rested his chin on her shoulder. "Need help with anything else?" He smiled.

Again, her pale makeup covered her tomato face. "No, I can manage!" She quickly said. He frowned at her and gave her a tight squeeze, "Fine."

With that, he let go of her and went off to another side of the room, slowly removing his kimono. She just stared and wanted to throw something at him. "W-what are you doing?!"

He paused and turned to her. "...changing?" He paused. "We're married now, so it's okay," he winked at her. Kira wanted to slap herself. Duh! Putting on her best poker face, she took a cloth and started to wipe away at the makeup. Bits of her slightly darker skin peaked through the powdery white until she could see herself again.

Going to her closet, her fingers numbly went to her obi as she - very slowly - untied it. After fussing with the darn knot for a while, she sighed, not even daring to look at Okita. "C...could you help me again?"

He smiled and head back over to her, by now, he was already in his sleeping yukata. Slowly undoing the belt, he resting his chin on her shoulder again. "You should know...your neck is really red."

"Wh-oh my God! Shut up!" It just got even redder. It seemed like forever as the belt was being undone. Was he doing this on purpose? "Just...ah, shut up..!"

Okita let out a low chuckle and the belt was finally undone. His hands went up her arms and then to her shoulders, tugging at her kimono. "Is this okay? Just tell me if it's not."

Kira had to keep on reminding herself that they were married•which was hard to believe since it didn't really make anything different...just being with him as usual...besides this part and the fact that they would be sharing a room for now on. "Will do" she murmured softly. Her heart was beating rapidly and she shivered as she felt the air touch her baring skin. The kimono was tugged off her shoulders and he gazed at her bare shoulders and neck.

After minutes that went by like hours, Kira finally got the nerve to tell him that she could do it on her own and she did and quickly jumped into her sleeping yukata, feeling suddenly numb and nervous.

Turning to him, she didn't say anything. She didn't know what _to_ say. But Okita spoke instead. "Time to sleep." She nodded. Everything was just really quiet and excruciatingly awkward. It was like the ice was building back up.

"Okita•"

It was stopped with a kiss. Kira sighed in content as she wrapped her arms around his neck, suddenly feeling at peace once again. As their lips parted, he murmured softly. "Just call me Souji. We're married now, are we not?"

She nodded. "Souji" Although she never said his first name before, it seemed comfortable as the name sat in her mouth.

"What is it?"

"I'll be honest with you, I'm completely nervous."

"Don't worry, same here," he smiled as his fingers went through her hair, letting her brown hair fall back onto her shoulders. "We don't _have _to do it on the first night. Just tell me okay?" He winked and kissed her again. "But I can't promise you anything," he chuckled.

She nodded as Okita set them both down on the futon, returning his kisses as she buried her fingers into his hair. With every kiss, she felt safer. He was her world now and she didn't need to worry about anything anymore.

He pulled away from her lips, kissing her cheek, then tracing up to her ear. She shuddered as she felt his hot breath, hearing his deep breathing. These were soft kisses, but the effect was amplified by triple.

His feathery kisses eventually started to go down her neck, and she let out a surprised noise. Her skin tingled wherever he kissed, just sending more sparks through her body. Her heart hammered against her chest, as if it were going to explode. "S...Souji" she murmured. The way his name rolled off her tongue just made her even more...excited.

"What is it?" Okita's hot voice went back to her ear again.

Kira never knew she had this side of her, let alone these noises that she was making. "Nnn...kiss." She whimpered.

"If you want it" he kissed her cheek and then his lips hovered over hers, brushing up against them teasingly. She opened her mouth, ready for a kiss, but he pulled away at the last minute. "Come get it."

She let out a frustrated noise and pulled him back, lifting her head up as well. Their lips touched again, but he pulled away, making her even more irritated. "You're being...really mean." She muttered.

"Come on," he cooed hotly. "I'm right here." She could feel his breath on her lips, so painfully close.

Gripping his hair tightly, she pulled his head back, raking up all the energy she had to meet him halfway rather passionately. You could say that she turned off her mind and let touches and kisses lead her. Lips danced with each other as both sides started to fight for dominance, Kira challenging him and then him overcoming her.

Pulling away from her swollen lips, Okita trailed down her neck with kisses and bites, earning him a few gasps and surprised noises. His hair tickled her soft skin, which was now being covered by his marks.

"Mmm" He chuckled and started to tug at her sleeping yukata. "This

is bad...I don't want to stop" he paused.

She didn't know how to respond-her mind was fuzzy as it already was. She just tightened her grip on his hair, letting out soft pants. All she knew was that she wanted more kisses...more touching.

"I'll give you to the count of three to stop" he paused. "One" she said nothing as excitement built up inside her. "Two," his husky voice reverberated off her skin as he gave it a kiss, sliding her yukata off her shoulders. "Three."

* * *

><p>Kira woke up beside her husband, who had an arm around her, his hand resting on her pregnant belly. She yawned and snuggled up to him, poking his arm. "Wakey, wakey, sunshine."<p>

"Mmm...let me sleep," he murmured as he buried his face in her neck.

"Your kid wants food, and so do I," she said, nudging him. Okita groaned and just snuggled up even closer to her. "He better not steal all of your attention from me."

She ran a hand over her pregnant belly, humming contently. "You sure it won't be a girl? Just think about it! A mini-me running all over the place." Her eyes and grin widened at the thought.

"And I'll have two precious girls I have to worry about," he chuckled as he sat up, helping her as well. He gave her a light kiss on the lips and then her belly.

It had been almost half a year since they've been married, happily as well. When Kira realized that she was pregnant and told Okita the news, he had refused to let her help with things since it might stress the baby, but Kira just kept on plowing through; stubborn as usual. But as the weeks went by, she willingly let go of her power and was starting to like getting spoiled.

"I wonder if it'll look like you or me the most." He murmured.

"We'll just have to find out," she smiled. The two got dressed and Okita helped her a bit.

"Hey, why don't we go eat out? Just the two of us," he asked, hugging her from behind with his hands laced with hers.

"Sounds good" she replied, taking comfort in his arms. Silence filled the room, as Kira was thinking...thinking how things would've happened if she went back. She would probably be in college, maybe have a boyfriend? Her heart lurched when she thought of someone else instead of Okita.

"You okay? You're thinking about something, aren't you?" He inquired.

She shook her head, snapping out of her trance. "It's nothing, just spacing out. C'mon, let's go," she smiled as she tugged on his hand leading him out of the room.

This was her new life, and she didn't regret it at all. She was surrounded with so much love, and she has a child to prove it. This was their story, a love so strong that it united two different eras. Among the ashes of her old life, something...or someone else grew in its place and she was more than happy to call him home.

* * *

><p>Saw some of your reviews-I don't do lemons orz sorry XD can't get in trouble with FF you know! Please don't kill me XD

:'D We're finally done! Kinda...one more! Thank you guys so much! I can't believe it! I've finished a fanfiction for the first time! Ahhh it feels so nice! I don't know what else to express how grateful I am to have inspiring, and kind reviewers! Please stick around for the final chapter of Dance of Swords!

--With love, Jen

21. A Hole in Her Heart

**WARNING: the following is an alternate ending about Kira's choice in chapter 18. For those of you who don't want the possibility of having their heart ripped out and put back, PLEASE DON'T READ THIS! ...unless if you're really curious. **

Ahh! Hey guys! XD So yeah, the warning says it all. I had a hard time typing this chapter, on an emotional standpoint anyways. XD read at your own risk! This starts just after Okita had been slashed by a Rasetsu, protecting Kira.

* * *

><p>"OKITA!" She screamed until she couldn't utter a word. Okita's knees buckled, bringing Kira down with him as his grip loosened around her. The Rasetsu cackled as he licked the blood off the sword, eyeing Okita with his beady red eyes.<p>

Okita groaned as the burning pain raced through his back and then all over his body. "Goâ€|"

What did he say? She blinked. "What-"

"You heard me! Go! What's the point in staying with me...if I can't protect youâ€|" he murmured.

"But...what will happen to you?!"

He looked up at her with fading green eyes. "I don't know," he chuckled sadly. The Rasetsu behind them leered at them, wanting more of what was on his sword. "But at this rate...I won't be able to keep you away from these demons...you need to go back...where it's safeâ€|"

"This is really cruel you know!" Tears raced down her cheeks, her voice cracking with every word. And then a choked scream came from behind. The Rasetsu stood with its back arched and a sword pierced

right through where his heart was. The sword ripped away, splattering blood on both of them in arrays of abstract patterns.

The demon fell, sprawled on the floor with Kazama standing behind it, holding the bloodied sword. "Make your choice, girl. You're wasting time." He said curtly before turning to face the other demons. "I'm tired of hearing and looking at these fake demons, they're a disgrace to all the oni clan."

She hadn't been so grateful...and surprised. He was actually helping them...maybe he was just going to kill them because he felt like it, but either way, it was giving Kira more time. She was sure she wanted to stay, but now Okita was pushing her back. Her mind had never been so cloudy.

"Okita, c'mon stay with me!" She pleaded as her tears fell.

"Kira...I need you to do this for me, I can't stand...thinking of you dying here...out of all places," he heaved in a breath and stood up shakily. Kira held onto his hands, which were on her shoulders.

"We...we can think of something!" If she didn't know any better, she would be digging her nails into his skin. "Please-it won't feel right leaving you like this!"

A sad look appeared on his face, teary eyes with a genuine smile. His eyebrows furrowed as he looked at her. "I wish I could've met you earlier," he murmured. She could hear his voice starting to crack. Okita didn't want to do this, but he had to; to protect her. He had become selfish with that request, forcing her to adapt a new lifestyle. He didn't want to make her go through this hell ever again. Moving a hand to her face, he stroked her cheek with his bloody thumb. "I love you," he said, leaning in. "Don't you ever forget it."

The moment was brief, as his warm lips were on hers for a moment before she felt herself being flung backwards. Kira widened her eyes as she realized what was happening. The world around her was now surrounded by the swirling stars and lights. Okita's image was fading away slowly. "Okita! NO!" She sobbed and cried out. "Don't do this!" Kira's arms reached out for his fading image, but as her fingers brushed over the fuzzy picture, it dissipated like dust in the air. Kira let out a whimper before letting out an anguished scream until she knew her throat went raw.

Her world was ripped away from her again as her body was being tugged along by an unknown force, back to her real world, the world she didn't want to be in anymore.

* * *

><p>Shooting her eyes open, she sat up like lightning, letting out a scream that shook her eardrums. She curled up into a ball as she covered her eyes, crying pathetically as tears flooded down onto the sheets.<p>

"She's awake!" Someone exclaimed. She could feel someone's hand on her shoulder, but she jerked away screaming, "GET AWAY FROM

ME!"

"Kira! Kira, honey, it's us!" Even though she had been gone for a long time, she knew her mother's voice better than anyone. But she didn't want her mom here, she didn't want any of this back. She wanted to go back. All this time, she wanted to stay, and it was too late.

"He's gone...he's gone! Okita!" Kira murmured frantically. "Dear godâ€|" she hiccuped. That sudden realization. He died. Either from the wounds or of old age. She could never meet him again.

A hole in her heart festered and grew. In the pit of her stomach, she felt sick. Angry, sad, frustrated, devastated...pained.

Kira wasn't dazed when she woke up, she was wide awake and instantly knew her surroundings. She was in a hospital room and her favorite blanket was covering her body. Wires were connected to her wrists, which were hooked up to machines that beeped rhythmically.

Nurses rushed in to see what was all the commotion. They started to instruct each other on how to get everything calm again. A nurse went up to Kira and cooed her with gentle words, but she didn't want any of it. She shook her head and covered her ears, burying her face in her knees. She needed to get away, and she started to recede into the deep corners of her mind. That was the only place that Okita and her Shinsengumi family existed now.

It had been a solid hour by the time things settled down. Kira sat upright in her bed, staring blankly at her unappetizing hospital food with a nurse checking the monitors to make sure things were stable. Her parents sat next to her bed, her mom was texting and calling probably everyone out of her contacts to say that Kira was awake.

Apparently, she had been in a coma for nearly half a year since the accident was so intense. Her dad was going through an intersection when a large truck ran a red light and plowed into theirs. Her dad walked away with a broken leg, a concussion and stitches, the driver was sent to the hospital, discharged a week later and she...her injuries caused her to retreat into a coma with a broken arm and two broken legs...and other broken stuff. She only missed the first few months of school, so she didn't have to worry about repeating a gradeâ€•not that she cared.

"Kira, you haven't eaten yet," her dad said. Kira wasn't allowed to eat solid foods as the doctors weren't sure if she could take in solid foods just yet, so everything was liquid. Gross.

"Not hungry." She replied, not even looking at him.

"Could...could you just eat a little, please?" He asked, he almost sounded like he was begging.

She sighed and continued to look at her tray. The spark in her eyes had faded and her cheery face was replaced with an apathetic stare. Her mom put down the phone and walked up to her bed, holding her hand with a familiar gentleness. "What's wrong? Did...did you have a nightmare all this time?"

Kira shook her head in the slightest. It wasn't a nightmare, more like a dream come true. Love, adventure, friendship. It sounded just like a movie, and she was at the climax, arriving to a happy ending, but the script was rewritten and it turned into a tragedy like the Shakespeare plays.

This was the nightmare.

* * *

><p>Ever since, Kira dropped dance. Her friends were shocked and tried to understand, questioned, and attempted to recruit her back in, but it all ended the same.<p>

"I don't feel like it."

Her grades were below her usual straight A's. She only did what she felt like and spent most of her time on the couch or on her laptop, looking up ancient Japanese history, looking up 'Okita Souji' a couple times.

He was the Shinsengumi's captain of the first division, one of the most skilled samurai's in the Shinsengumi. Died of tuberculosis.

She knew that thinking about him was unhealthy, let alone look him up. But then she got her fill on the rest of the members from Google. She smiled to herself, something that was rare now, thinking of how she was involved in some of these events. She was right there all alone. It was like they combed out her tracks and left holes in some things.

By now, it was November, and she hadn't exactly gotten over the experience. Now sitting in her government class, she listened to the drone about the seats in the Senate...or whatever. She tuned out of the lecture and just stared at her phone, not even amused with all the apps.

Now she wished she took a picture of the guys when her phone still had battery left. She knew for a fact that that was all real...and waking up in a hospital seemed staged. It seemed like there was a hole in her life, and there was no way in filling it back up.

Time went on by slowly, and the bell finally rang. Students scrambled to get their things after her teacher handed out the homework last minute, but Kira took her time. When she slung her bag over her shoulder, her teacher stopped her.

Setting a stack of papers on the desk, Mrs. Lane looked at her, "Kira."

She looked up.

"It's still hard to think that Kim told me you quit dance. It's a shame, you were a great dancer." She sighed with a sad smile. "I'm not trying to make you do something you don't want to do, but getting back into what you love will help you get back on your feet."

Kim was Mrs. Lane's sister; Kira's dance teacher, Ms. Ray.

Kira gave her a tight smile. "Maybe."

"If you need anyone to talk to, I'm here, you know that. Don't worry," she assured. "It'll get better." She had no idea what she was talking about. Kira appreciated her kind words...but that wasn't why she shut down. No one had any idea. She had this conversation with Mrs. Lane occasionally, so being stopped by her wasn't anything new.

"Dad's waiting for me," she said after a while. "I'll see you next class."

She nodded. "Have a nice weekend."

"You too." And then she left. The majority of the crowds had disappeared and small groups lingered in the halls, waiting for their rides. She was alone again. She never thought that this would happen to her, shutting down so suddenly. She thought her life would be the same-old same-old; comfortable, but it took a turn.

She stopped though, glancing at the hall where the dance studio was in. She could hear girls chatter as they put their school things away and got ready for practice. Her feet went off on their own, and she shuffled to the door, peering into the small window.

She saw those mirrors that lined up the walls, the bars and the set of speakers that were hung in the corners of the room. Girls went to the floor, stretching. She saw Casy and Bryn, and they saw her in return.

They looked surprised, happy surprised. Bryn smiled and gestured for her to come inside, as if Kira was standing out on the doorstep of a house filled with family, beckoning for her to come back home. But she didn't. She just smiled and waved at them once before turning on her heels. The hole in her heart hurt, she really missed dancing, just as much as she missed Okita, and it was him who held her back. The thought of any dancing would make her remember...dancing with him. Waltzing, out of all things.

And then she bumped into someone's chest. She murmured a little apology and looked up at who she ran into.

You could say her heart stopped, you could say that the entire world stopped. She hadn't stopped in a while. And then her heart rose to her throat, and she couldn't utter a word. Her eyes seemed entranced with those same emerald eyes. Those eyes that glinted with smiles inside, those eyes that were so bright they stood out from the rest.

Did you see what she saw?

His topknot was gone and his hair was cut shorter. He wore a hoodie and jeans with a backpack over his shoulder! And her eyes flickered to the parchment in his hand.

"Sorry about that," he said with a smile. "I'm kinda lost."

She finally kicked herself to do something. "Oh! No, no, you're fine. I'm pretty dazed today." Kira fought the tears threatening her.

"Ahh, do you think you can help me? I'm supposed to head to the gym...but," he peered into the window. "This isn't it."

"You have an extra class?"

He nodded. "I transferred here from Japan. I used to live here and moved to Japan a few years ago, now I'm back. I have to make up some credits."

"Yeah...uhm, the gym is all the way on the other side of the school." She pointed down in the general direction. "I can show you-if you want." She couldn't believe it. Either fate was playing a sick joke, or this was for real. "I'm Kira, by the way." Her heart fluttered a bit.

"I'm Souji," he grinned. The two walked down the hall. She was trying her hardest from asking him so many questions or just hugging him to death and cry all over his hoodie. Her heart was beating hard against her chest and if you looked closely, you could see it beat under her shirt.

"So...Japan huh?"

"Yeah, pretty crazy. Parents wanted to suddenly move there andâ€¦" he paused, "now I'm here with my sister." She knew. His parents died and his sister...is still alive? Didn't she dieâ€•don't focus on the past. Okita is right here!

"Feels good to be back?"

"I guess," he shrugged. "It's better now that I have you here to help me," he grinned. Oh, how she missed that flirty smirk. "You know, 'Kira' means sparkle in Japanese."

"Reallyâ€¦" she smiled. "I would've never guessed; you've enlightened me." She replied haughtily, as if she was back.

"That's good."

It all went too fast. They were at the gym now, and she could hear the sound of basketballs dribbling on the other side of the doors. She looked at the doors and then at him. "Well, we're here. Have fun surviving gym."

"It won't be surviving, it'll be living. I love gymâ€•and kendo, it'sâ€•"

"I know, it's basically Japanese fencing, originally for samurai training." She widened her eyes. Oops.

_Good job, Kira. Now you're passing yourself off as some nerd.

—

Though he looked impressed. He arched a brow. "You've heard of it? Are you in it too?"

She shook her head. "I used real swords."

"Ehhh, no kidding." Okay, he looked really surprised. It was weird to see him less flirty. "Maybe you can teach me a thing or two~" He

mused. He grabbed the handle and looked at her. "We should spar sometime then. See you later, Kira-_chan_."

Kira smiled dorkily and shook her head, chuckling lightly at the nickname. Don't worry, she was beyond excited after hearing that. "Yeah, yeah, I guess. Maybe if you get lost again."

"Count on it," he winked and headed inside.

She was alone again...but the hole in her heart was mending. Putting a hand over her mouth, tears streamed down her face. She fanned her face, murmuring, "Oh my God" repeatedly as she hiccuped. All of her bottled emotions flooded once again and her old self was resurfacing. Her reflection was blurry, but it was there. She could start to see who she was before.

She had a second chance.

And so this was it. A girl who went back in time, got her heart stolen away, stealing his as well and brought it back home. A love that was strong enough to turn that heart into that man, strong enough to transcend through time.

This was their story.

* * *

><p>And that ladies and gentlemen, was Dance of Swords. I'm not sure which ending was better-though this was the most feely. AAAGH I CAN'T BELIEVE IT YOU GUYS! WE'RE DONE!

**Thank you guys so much for your overflowing support! I managed to finish this story in a year, and I honestly thought I would never finish it. ; A ; ahhh, it sucks since I don't know what to say!
**

Big shout out to: **Puppylove7****, ****Jinxes****, ****Anime hotty lover.18****, ****xXAnimeLoverpotterhead4lifeXx****, ****gurdianofearth**** and ****OuttaGalaxy**** for reviewing my chapters ever since I came back! You stuck out to me the most, and you are the bomb diggety.**

I've read some reviews, and **_would**_** you guys want a sequel? I feel like there's unfinished business with the alternate ending...maybe I could make a sequel out of this chapter since the true ending tied up all the loose knots. **

**I don't know, it's up to you guys! Please let me know in the reviews and we'll see what happens! **

*****IMPORTANT: I have just started a new story, I'm not sure if you've guys seen it on my profile, but it's a new Hakuouki fanfiction with an OC in it once again, the pairing is still kinda iffy, I would love it if you guys go check that out and give me some feedback! The story is called **_**Illusions. I kinda need to get an idea who I should pair her with : 'D Thank you!**_*****

**Regardless, I hope you enjoyed Dance of Swords and hopefully I'll get back with you guys with another story, real soon.
**

****Jen****

End
file.